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Edited by
RALPH HILL

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CONTENTS

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS: <i>Ralph Hill</i>	p. 7
THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC CRITICISM:	
<i>R. Crawshay-Williams</i>	13
ON READING A SCORE: <i>Gordon Jacob</i>	27
THE CLARINET AND ITS MUSIC:	
<i>Frederick Thurston</i>	32
TIMPANI LURE: <i>Joyce Aldous</i>	39
VISIT TO PRAGUE: <i>Kenneth Adam</i>	42
THE ITALIAN SCENE: <i>Edward Lockspeiser</i>	47
TERMINOLOGICAL EXACTITUDES:	
<i>Denis Stevens</i>	53
CHAMBER MUSIC: AN IMPRESSION:	
<i>Joyce Atkins</i>	59
PERSONALITY CORNER: <i>C. B. Rees</i>	63
BRAINS TRUST: <i>Julian Herbage</i>	67
NEW BOOKS: <i>Various</i>	72
NEW MUSIC: <i>Robin Hull</i>	91
GRAMOPHONE COMMENTARY: <i>Ralph Hill</i>	95
MUSIC OF THE FILM: <i>Scott Goddard</i>	100
MUSIC OVER THE AIR: <i>Stanley Bayliss</i>	103
OPERA IN LONDON: <i>Stephen Williams</i>	108
BALLET IN LONDON: <i>Arnold L. Haskell</i>	113
CONCERTS IN LONDON: <i>George Dannatt</i>	116

NORTHERN DIARY—

Scotland: <i>Maurice Lindsay</i>	p. 122
Liverpool: <i>A. K. Holland</i>	125
Leeds: <i>Eric Todd</i>	127
Manchester: <i>J. H. Elliot</i>	131
Birmingham: <i>John Waterhouse</i>	134
DESULTORIA—II: <i>N. L. Smith</i>	137

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

RALPH HILL



SILVER JUBILEE OF THE B.B.C.

It is a difficult effort for the imagination to go back twenty-five years and reconstruct life without radio. Radio, like the film, the telephone, and the car, is now an integral part of our lives, whether it is used by thoughtless people merely as a noisy background or by intelligent people as a selective entertainment and cultural experience. In these twenty-five years the B.B.C. has slowly and surely developed and expanded into a great power, both for good and for evil. And in all fairness I think that the good has easily outpaced the evil. Nevertheless, there is a touch of smug complacency about Sir William Haley when he says in the *Radio Times* that 'it has steadily been the B.B.C.'s aim to win appreciation for the true, the beautiful, and the good. It must do so within the general necessity to provide the public with entertainment, but its guiding purpose is steadily, and with the confidence and acceptance of listeners as a whole, to raise public taste.' Some of the rubbish the B.B.C. has seen fit to broadcast in the name of entertainment has been nothing more than a sop for the lowest taste of the masses. It may have been entertainment, but it was the negation of the true, the beautiful, and the good.

However, I was glad to see that Haley had the generosity to acknowledge publicly what British broadcasting owes to Lord Reith. He rightly said: 'Life for millions in this generation has been made richer and fuller for his efforts. He came to launch broadcasting. No chart or course existed. There was no experience to draw upon, no traditions to guide. He went forward

with energy, vision, and faith. There were opponents. They were not serious. There was a vast multitude who saw little in the new invention and who did not much care to what use it was put. That was most serious. The story will one day be told how Mr Reith, as he then was, went about, cajoling, urging, bullying, exhorting those forces that stand for what is best in the community to realise what broadcasting could do for them. There is little he foresaw that has not since come to pass. Not all his dreams, perhaps, have been realised. But there is none yet proved finally incapable of realisation.'

Lord Reith, indeed, was the only Director-General of the B.B.C. who really understood broadcasting, for he served his apprenticeship and gained practical experience of it from the beginning. Why, then, we may well ask, has he not been made Chairman of the Board of Governors?

Among the actual broadcast Jubilee celebrations were three talks on the Third Programme under the collective title *Twenty-five Years of Broadcasting*. First, there was Professor I. A. Richards of Harvard on *The Voice Alone*. Professor Richards is said to have made a special study of the differences between speech and writing. It is a pity he had not made a special study of the differences between speech delivered in the presence of an audience and speech delivered through a microphone. I have never heard such a curious mixture of monotonous delivery and erratic tempo. What a difference in Professor J. A. Westrup of Oxford, who gave a first-class talk and broadcast on *Music*. The combination of erudition, keen and judicial discernment, and broad, human sympathy and understanding makes Professor Westrup an outstanding and refreshing figure in present-day pedagogic circles.

Thirdly came Sir William Haley to talk about *The Place of Broadcasting*. His talk was somewhat smug, unctuous and Bowley-like. Some of his remarks seemed to drip off his tongue like ersatz honey. 'The true will always drive out the false,' drooled Haley.

Indeed, *always*? What about the wholesale resignations during the last couple of years of musicians, producers, and journalists, all of whom had been loyal, experienced, and highly respected members of the B.B.C. staff? A few days after Haley let slip this commonplace aphorism Maurice Gorham, Director of Television, resigned after nearly 20 years of important service. He is a man of outstanding ability, loyalty, and integrity.

'The true will always drive out the false'? What *utter* poppycock!

YOUNG ARTISTS AND THE CRITICS

'As I know that you have the interests of young artists at heart, I am taking the liberty of sending you this letter together with two tickets for Jennifer Blank's pianoforte recital at the Wigstein Hall next Friday evening. Miss Blank would be very encouraged if you would write a few lines about her playing. I know you are a very busy man and therefore I would not bother you unless I was sure that your time would not be wasted. I will say no more than that Miss Blank's playing deserves your earnest consideration.' This is typical of many letters I receive as music critic of the *Daily Mail*; it is typical of many letters my colleagues receive as music critics of other leading newspapers.

When I receive a letter of this kind my first and obvious reaction is to see what Miss Blank has chosen for her programme. It is usually stereotyped: Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata, and the usual group of hackneyed Chopin pieces. Does Miss Blank really imagine that in these days of four-page newspapers with a wealth of musical events from which to choose, the music critic is going to fill his valuable little bit of space by recording that Miss Blank played the usual Bach, Beethoven, and Chopin in the usual capable (or not quite so capable) manner?

Unless Miss Blank is a heaven-sent genius, and she is sure that she can safely compete against her famous and much

older rivals, there are only two sensible reasons for her giving a recital: (a) to gain experience in public playing, and (b) to secure the interest of the critics.

Speaking for the critics, the only way to interest us is for Miss Blank to play a programme of unfamiliar but first-class music. There is an enormous quantity of it. Apart from Beethoven's thirty-two Sonatas (reduced for recital purposes to fewer than ten), there is a wealth of fine and attractive music by Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Poulenc, Grieg, Bax, Ireland, Liszt, Rachmaninov, Szymanowski, to mention only ten names which immediately spring to mind. And mention of Beethoven reminds me of the very attractive and interesting *Variations on Rule Britannia* and *Variations on God Save the King*.

Neither the public nor the critics want to hear Miss Blank play Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata, or Chopin's *Scherzo in C minor*, unless, of course, Miss Blank happens to be another Paderewski or Rachmaninov. However, I have a suspicion that it is not altogether Miss Blank's fault.

First, she may have been wrongly advised by her lazy, ignorant professor (that is to say, ignorant outside the mechanics of piano playing), who merely hands on to his pupils his own small and stereotyped repertoire. Secondly, Miss Blank's professor is more than likely aided and abetted by her completely ignorant and philistine agent, who is as much interested in music as a spiv is in working for an honest living.

If Miss Blank takes my advice she will tell her dear professor to carry on sleeping in his warm study, and tell her agent to mind his own ten per cent for nothing. Miss Blank is going to lose money in any case, so why not lose it to some worthwhile musical purpose? She might even win the support of that small section of the musical public, which is intelligently progressive.

THE EDITOR'S DESK

The ability to read a score is essential if you want to study music deeply; the ability to follow a score in outline during a perform-

ance is equally essential if you want to listen to music intelligently and get the most out of your listening. To read a score silently and comprehensively is not an easy thing to do, for it requires considerable musicianship, experience, and power of concentration. To follow the outlines of a score during a performance is not a difficult thing to achieve if you have mastered the elements of musical theory. In his excellent article *On Reading a Score* on page 27, Gordon Jacob gives some hints to aspiring beginners which ought to be useful and encouraging.

Mr Jacob, who is a well-known composer and a professor of composition and orchestration at the Royal College of Music, has been appointed Editor of Penguin's new series of miniature scores, of which the first batch of titles is shortly due for publication – Beethoven's Overtures *Coriolanus* and *Leonora No. 3*, Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G minor, and Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos Nos. 2 and 4*. This series will be a boon to students, gramophiles, and intelligent listeners. Each score, which is to be published at half a crown, will include a biographical study of the composer and an analysis of the work, which will be presented exactly as the composer wrote it, without simplifications or editorial additions. This important venture comes just at the right time, when a large and intelligent young public for great music has a large appetite for knowledge and limited means to appease it.

A new regular feature has been added to *Northern Diary*. I refer to the article on music in Leeds by Eric Todd, who is music critic of the *Yorkshire Evening News*. I hope this will not cause any jealous feelings among music-lovers from the many other cities that are not represented. Available space must be my first consideration, therefore it is necessary to confine *Northern Diary* only to those cities which are important musical centres with their own full-time, subsidized orchestras.

The Corporation of Leeds is to be congratulated on its formation on a very generous basis of the Yorkshire Symphony Or-

chestra, which serves other cities and towns in the county besides Leeds. Up to the moment of writing these words I have not yet had the opportunity of hearing the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra, but from reliable sources I gather that it is an excellent combination and has started off with great success. I wish both the Orchestra and its conductor Maurice Miles good luck and continued success.

A word of congratulation must also be given to the Bournemouth Corporation for its equally generous backing of the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, which has been resuscitated under Rudolf Schwarz. I heard this orchestra play a few days after it had given its first concert of the season. It had attained already a fine ensemble and showed every promise of becoming one of the outstanding orchestras in the county.

A word of apology must be made to William Alwyn, whom Scott Goddard, in *Penguin Music Magazine* No. IV, inadvertently mentioned as the composer of the music for the film *The Courtneys of Curzon Street*. The correct name of the composer should have been Anthony Collins.

THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC CRITICISM

RUPERT CRAWSHAY-WILLIAMS



IN his Foreword to the first issue of *Penguin Music Magazine*, the Editor, referring to the gramophone societies and music clubs which flourish all over the country, emphasized 'the need for information and criticism of the right kind'. Now, what is the right kind of information and criticism? An easy question to ask – and, in the case of information, easy enough to answer. For there are objective tests by which the rightness of information can be judged; even though the facts may sometimes be difficult to verify with reasonable certainty, there is at least some conceivable way of doing so. In the case of criticism, on the other hand, the situation is very different; when we make a valuation of a symphony, for instance, there are no objective tests by which we can judge whether we are right. The nearest we can get is a sort of Gallup poll: if a large majority of reasonably cultured people like the symphony, we can be fairly certain that the symphony is fairly good. But we cannot really hope for more certainty than that; the symphony's value, though real enough, may be ephemeral – its qualities may be tied in some way to the contemporary background of culture and have no universal appeal. Remember the symphonies of Raff – but that is the point! We *don't* remember them; all we remember is something about a *cavatina*. In fact, we can hardly believe that, in the middle of his career, Raff was bracketed by competent musicians with Schubert, Brahms, and Beethoven as one of the great symphonists of his time. Even more unbelievable is such a verdict as Tchaikovsky's in a letter to Nadejda von Meck:

'Played Brahms. It irritates me that this self-conscious mediocrity should be recognised as a genius. In comparison with him, Raff was a giant, not to speak of Rubinstein, who was a much greater man.' The verdicts of composers on each other are, of course, notoriously erratic, as Verdi himself pointed out: 'Think of the views expressed by Weber, Schumann or Mendelssohn concerning Rossini, Meyerbeer and others, and tell me whether there is any reason to believe a composer's opinion.' A composer's opinion is perhaps inevitably biased, sometimes by jealousy, more often by the strongly subjective feelings of creative genius. But there is ample evidence to show that, although no such bias is to be expected in the opinions of professional critics, these are almost equally erratic; they vary too much and too violently to afford any reliable standards.

The only real test, then, of a piece of music is that it should be liked by several generations of cultured people. But, unfortunately, when a new composition is in question, this test takes an inconveniently long time. And without it we are left very much in the air.

The problem of the subjectivity of critical opinion is one which has played a very odd part in the history of art in general. In some contexts this subjectivity is accepted without demur: *de gustibus ...* we say with a shrug. But, in other contexts it is passionately denied – if not openly, at any rate by implication. As it happens, recent work by such students of the functions of language as the semanticists and logical positivists has tended to confirm the view that subjectivity must be accepted. And, as will already have become obvious, I am assuming that this view is correct – that there are no absolute standards in art and that criticism is therefore mainly the expression of personal feeling, not the assessment of objective fact. There are, it is true, many people who still take the opposite view. But for practical – as opposed to philosophical – purposes, this opposite view may, I think, be ignored, for the following reason. Take, for instance, the age-old question as to whether there is a 'true' meaning of

the word 'beautiful' when applied to music; that is to say, whether a critic has the right to assume that, in some absolute sense, there are songs which are truly beautiful and songs which are not. Even if we allow that there may be such a True Meaning, it does not help us, for we have no way of finding out what it is. The history of æsthetics is one long series of arguments in which each person has claimed that *his* meaning of the word is the True one, usually because he was trying to prove that what he thought beautiful was what everybody else ought to find beautiful; and who is to judge between all the disputants?

However, to say that there are no absolute standards is not to say there are no standards at all. Clearly, in any one community and in any one fairly continuous culture-pattern (such as that of Western Europe) there will be a certain amount of agreement in practice as to what is valuable. Besides, human beings have all got largely similar emotional and physical mechanisms. We do, therefore, get wide agreement about the greatness of certain creative artists, though even then the agreement is on a very broad and vague basis. Everybody agrees that Beethoven is a great composer; but this is after the event – after the judgment of several generations. Even now there is considerable disagreement as to his relative greatness compared (say) with Mozart, and even more disagreement over the merits of individual works such as the *Choral Symphony*.

For practical purposes, then, and in dealing with new works, we may as well accept the view that criticism is largely the expression of personal feeling, not the assessment of objective fact. And, in any case, this is more likely to be true of music than of any other art. There is, of course, some objective basis for judging standards of performance: most people will agree as to whether a singer is in tune, whether a pianist's *legato* is smooth, or whether a horn player is bubbling. But when it comes down to interpretation, and to the actual merits of the music being interpreted, the problem is made particularly difficult by two factors: first, unlike that of poetry or painting, the medium of

communication in music uses no signs or symbols which have any connection with everyday life and thus with the words inevitably used in criticism; secondly, there is no utilitarian purpose (as there is in architecture and sometimes in painting and poetry) which will give the critic an opportunity at least to talk about comfort or logical clarity or accuracy of representation. Music, in fact, serves purposes and communicates emotions which cannot be expressed (or even referred to with any accuracy) in words, precisely because they cannot be expressed in words.

If this is so, what can the music critic hope to achieve? His main object, of course, is to try to tell us, not only whether we would like a piece of music if we were to hear it, but also whether it is worth our while to persevere with it even if we find it difficult to appreciate at first. In attempting to achieve this purpose, he cannot describe the emotional content of the music and then leave us to judge; for no words can do this. Nor can he say, with reasonable certainty, that everybody will feel pleasure on hearing this symphony, pain on hearing that song, and passion on hearing the other opera. Much less can he describe what *kind* of feeling, whether of pleasure or pain, he thinks everybody will experience. However, what he can do is very much better than nothing. He can try to suggest what kind of feeling he himself experienced, while at the same time showing what kind of person he himself is, so that other people can guess whether they are likely to have the same sort of feelings about the same sort of things. And he has two main methods of doing this. One is to describe directly, and as evocatively as possible, his own feelings. The value of this method depends partly on how clever he is at comparing musical feelings with other more easily described feelings (this is a point which will be amplified later), partly on how completely his style of writing indicates his own emotional make-up, and partly on how much his readers already know of his reactions to music they themselves have heard (a powerful argument, by

the way, against anonymous criticism). The other method is to show the relation between the feelings he got from the new music and the feelings he got from other music already known to his readers; in other words, to compare the new work with older ones and those of other composers. Then, in addition to expressing his own feelings, he can of course try to indicate what position the new work takes in the main stream of music. This kind of criticism is relatively objective, since it does not involve judgments of value; it can explain what form the work is written in, whether it is atonal or neo-classic, whether it is intended to be 'pure' or 'programme', and so on. (Incidentally, it is this technique which is the basis of most historical scholarship.)

Now, it seems to me that, if a critic can manage to do all this, he will be making a valuable contribution to our pleasure in, and appreciation of, music. There is surely no need to feel that, because he is forced to talk mainly about his own feelings rather than about objective fact, his observations are useless. And yet this is what many people do feel. They appear to think that we cannot reject absolute standards of art without destroying all standards.

Here we come to a point which clarifies the main purpose of this article. As a rule, anybody who argues that music criticism is mainly – and inevitably – subjective is regarded as trying to debunk the whole subject. This is by no means my purpose, though I admit I hope to debunk some kinds of music criticism. On the other hand, assuming it to be true that criticism of music is more often subjective than it is in any of the other arts, it follows that a lot of unnecessary and futile argument results from a failure to acknowledge the fact. My purpose, therefore, is to try to clarify the position – to show when the objective approach is appropriate and when the subjective is not only appropriate but valuable. In fact, I wish to establish the value and scope of subjective opinion – not to denounce it as *merely* subjective.

The most prolific source of confusion, it seems to me, lies in our tendency to imagine that, when we ourselves think something is good, the majority of right-thinking people will – or at any rate ought to – agree with us. This is, after all, a very natural tendency. When two people are arguing about the value of Arthur Bliss's *Music for Strings*, and when we ourselves have no particular feelings either way, we may be prepared to admit that the question is one of taste – that there is no criterion which would both decide the issue and, more important, be accepted as final by a decisive majority of cultured people. On the other hand, when our own feelings are involved – when we are defending our liking, say, for Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* against someone who thinks it was a mistake to introduce voices into a symphony – we should be more than human if we did not feel that our opinion was worth something on its own merits. And this means, inevitably, that we are powerfully tempted to overlook the actual subjectivity of our own standards of taste. In other words, we wish to believe that our opinion has some objective validity – that there really is some absolute standard which lends it authority and makes it something more than a mere expression of personal liking. (With most people, by the way, this standard is connected with tradition, because too complete a break with tradition is too difficult to understand.) Few people, surely, can be quite content to admit that, when they say the last movement of the *Choral Symphony* is an artistic success, their observation has the same kind of critical value as when they say they like beef-steak.

Of course, no one need admit quite as much as this. But the point is that we do not like admitting even the possibility. And, naturally, the professional critic is particularly unwilling to do so. The result has been a tendency, throughout the history of all the arts, for criticism to disguise its subjectivity as much as possible, not only from its readers but also from its writers. A further result has been that, since the critics have done most of

the writing about the arts, they have, so to speak, moulded their language to their own purposes; it has become a peculiarly effective instrument of disguise. (This has also happened in the fields of ethics and philosophy, with cumulative effect.)

Obviously, there is not space here to go into the whole question of how language can be used for purposes of deception. We must therefore concentrate, rather baldly, on those aspects of the subject which can help us to distinguish between bad and good criticism – ‘bad’ criticism, for our purposes, being criticism which pretends to be more objective than it really is. Let us take a few examples: first ‘Schönberg’s music (*Pierrot Lunaire*) is the last word in cacophony and musical anarchy.’ There is, this statement implies, universal agreement as to the correct definition of ‘cacophony’ and ‘anarchy’ in relation to music; and, it further implies, this correct definition is the one used by the writer himself. Actually, of course, no such universal agreement can be assumed; the writer’s self-deception, therefore, consists in imagining that what he means by cacophony really is cacophony in some objective sense. In this case, however, the baldness of his assertion makes it an ineffective disguise; it is easy for us to realize that it means no more than ‘I hate Schönberg’s music.’ But what about this on Schönberg’s *Five Orchestral Pieces*? ‘Schönberg’s music ... is a collection of sounds without relation to one another. It is the reproduction of the sounds of nature in their crudest form. Modern intellect has advanced beyond mere elementary noise: Schönberg has not.’ Substantially the same criticism is made in this example as in the first: the music is condemned as being cacophonous and anarchical. But here the writer has remembered the injunction given to him when he first tried to write essays: he has given his reasons. And the result is that he has at least partly defined his terms. Where the first writer merely used a vague word with derogatory associations, the second has been more precise; he has asserted that there is no relation between the various sounds and that the sounds themselves are crude.

The questions still remain, though: Can we say objectively that there is no relation between the sounds? Anyway, what exactly does the critic mean by 'relation'? And is there any universal definition of 'crude'? In other words, is the critic justified in assuming that where he finds no relation other people will similarly find no relation, and that what he finds crude is really crude in some objective sense?

I have taken examples from criticism of Schönberg's music for the special reason that this music is still regarded by many intelligent musicians as unsuccessful – in the sense that it fails to communicate its composer's intentions. It would have been easy to find examples of furious criticism of works which are now generally agreed to be valuable; but this would not have illustrated my point so well, because it would have been too obvious that the criticisms were merely subjective. What is interesting about the case of Schönberg's music is that, though the relations between his sounds are usually perceivable on paper, many people still find it impossible to perceive them by ear. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the two criticisms quoted were entirely wrong – by the test of later experience. Nevertheless, they pretended to be more objective than they really were and than was logically possible. Compare them with a recent discussion by Edward Sackville-West [from *Theseus and the Minotaur*, in *Polemic* 8]. Short quotations unfortunately cannot give the feel of Mr Sackville-West's argument. Those who have not read it must therefore take it on trust from me that it gives a general impression of openly acknowledging the subjective nature of musical appreciation while at the same time appealing to what may be called the 'majority' argument. That is to say, instead of insisting that Schönberg's music is ugly or bad in some absolute sense, and then concluding that people will not – in fact, *ought* not – to like it, Mr Sackville-West approaches the problem from the opposite direction: he takes as his starting-point the fact that many people cannot understand it, and then tries to explain why this is so. 'Even those,' he says,

'who have grasped the very complicated theory of "serial" composition usually find the results in practice as baffling as the Etruscan language.' Again, later: '... there is an absolute cleavage between the printed score and the actual sound. However complete our intellectual possession of the former, the latter seems to bear no relation to it.' (Notice the 'seems'.) And so on. Finally, he attempts to suggest by analogy the sort of mentally confused feeling which results from trying to appreciate the musical sequence of Schönberg's ideas: 'It is like plunging naked into a gorse bush and then trying to follow the pattern of the prickles.'

These examples serve roughly to illustrate three different kinds of attitude towards the job of criticism. We can bring out their distinguishing features by means of simplified caricatures – with headings which will explain themselves later.

*

(1) PSEUDO-OBJECTIVE

These orchestral pieces break a fundamental rule of true musical form; their composer has misunderstood the essential nature of the relation between musical ideas. This relation, properly speaking, is organic; it cannot depend on a mere haphazard throwing together of notes.

This kind of criticism is more deceptive than a mere assertion that a piece of music is atrocious or that it is the last word in cacophony. For it uses unemotional language, and it implicitly claims to be judging by objective standards. However, as this caricatured example suggests, there is one fairly reliable way of spotting the deception. This is to look out for words like 'fundamental', 'true', 'properly speaking', 'mere', etc., which indicate that the critic is using a vague but 'sweet-smelling' word in some particular sense of his own and at the same time persuading himself that this sense is the 'true' sense. (The trick depends on the belief, which has already been mentioned, that words like 'beautiful', 'poetry', 'music', 'organic', and so on have

one and only one correct meaning.) For instance, in the first sentence we at once suspect the words 'fundamental' and 'true'. What is true musical form? This, of course, is a question about which we could argue – and have argued for hundreds of years – without coming to an agreed decision. Therefore, by the words 'true musical form' the writer means 'the kind of musical form which I myself approve of and which I think everybody else ought to approve of as well.' The same sort of analysis applies to 'fundamental rule'. In fact, to make an honest sentence of this assertion, we must translate it as: 'These orchestral pieces break a rule which I consider extremely important to the kind of music I like.'

Of course, one seldom comes across a piece of criticism which is quite so over-stuffed with suspicious words as is our caricatured example. As a rule these words are used in moderation, as in this comment on Mahler, after his death in 1911: 'In his treatment of the simple melodies of his symphonies he was utterly inconsiderate of their essence.' Sometimes even the key words are not used at all for whole stretches of an argument, but are silently implied, as they were in the original example about Schönberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces*. In such cases it is often difficult to detect their influence. I will return later to an example of this kind.

*

The second kind of attitude towards criticism may be called:

(2) OBJECTIVE EXPLANATION OF SUBJECTIVE FEELING

I think many people will find this insufficiently moving (or difficult to understand – or too reminiscent of the Rhapsody in Blue). I do myself, because ... etc.

This type of attitude covers nearly all criticism that is potentially objective. For though the reasons why the critic disliked the reminiscence of Gershwin may be subjective, the *fact* of the reminiscence can usually be established without fear of serious

disagreement. Similarly, one can, as does Mr Sackville-West, give reasons which adequately explain why the critic, at any rate, finds himself emotionally unmoved. Here is another example of substantially the same attitude towards atonal music: 'Another objection that will have occurred to most readers is this: music is primarily a means of expressing things imagined or felt. Calculation plays a part in creation as in performance: the glowing imagination, the warm heart, must be controlled by the cool head. But in twelve-tone music calculation is pretty well everything.'

As it happens, this example is perhaps rather near to falling into our first category – into self-deception. For, though the writer ('Feste' in the *Musical Times* for August 1939) has given us some indication as to the reasons for his valuation of twelve-tone music, we do not know exactly which processes in composition are supposed to be 'calculation' and which 'warmth and imagination'. And, to that extent, his valuation sounds more precise and therefore more objective than it really is. However, this amount of 'pseudo-objectivity' is almost unavoidable in any music criticism which is reasonably concise and well written. The reader would be bored by a writer who spattered his criticism with hundreds of modest phrases like 'I think', or 'My feeling was', and who always explained precisely what he meant: life is too short for such pedantry. We have to write and speak to some extent as *if* our own values were absolute values and as if things were simpler than they really are. And of course this does not matter, provided we are aware of the *as if* and of how difficult it is to find the happy mean between conciseness and preciseness. Here is an example which does, I think, achieve this. It is from an article by Michael Tippett, on Hindemith's *Ludus Tonalis*, in the *New Statesman*: 'The general impression I get from this composition is of Hindemith's strong traditional sense and great cultivation of sensibility. His music is eminently civilised, European and Classical. The material he uses can be traced right back to the source of

the entire classical European tradition. ... ' And so on, in reasonably precise detail.

★

The third attitude towards criticism may be called:

(3) PURELY SUBJECTIVE

This music gave me certain vivid feelings. Since they were musical feelings, they cannot be expressed in words. But I will try to suggest what kind of feelings they were by using simile and metaphor – by describing other feelings which they resemble and which can be expressed in words. I hope you will be able to guess, from this, what your own feelings are likely to be.

It would, of course, take a whole book to analyse the technique of writing which this attitude demands; for it is really the technique of the prose-poem. In any case, it is as a rule openly subjective, so that it does not greatly concern us here. J. D. M. Rorke's *Musical Pilgrim's Progress* is an extended example. Here are two further short illustrations: the first, by M. D. Calvocoressi (*The Listener*, May 1934) is about Bartók's *Cantata Profana*: 'It is all a matter of spirit and colour, point, economy and fitness. The tone is incisive but restrained, forcible but quiet.' (Notice that these two sentences are almost entirely made up of metaphor drawn from non-musical activities and feelings.) 'The lines have the simplicity and clarity of definition of a picture by Braque or by Paul Nash – or of the Altamira bison.' The second illustration is from a comment by Ernest Newman (*Sunday Times*, July 1934) on Ireland's *Legend* for piano and orchestra: 'It is heavy-muscled, slightly clumsy, and decidedly attractive in its rough honest way. This music ... gives out a glow that is light rather than heat, and a north light at that; but what it lacks in warmth it makes up for in bracing power.'

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I think it is clear that the most valuable kind of criticism is that which combines the attitudes and the kind of language we

have illustrated in the second and third of these categories. The most dangerous, because most misleading, kind is that in the first category – the kind which deceives both reader and writer as to its objectivity. As I have suggested, this pseudo-objective criticism will sometimes produce long stretches of argument which are peculiarly deceptive because they do not actually use such words as 'true' and 'essence', but only imply them. For instance, in an article in *Horizon* for January 1947, René Leibowitz argues that Schönberg's music ought really to be called traditional. In my opinion, the thread of his argument depends on his giving the word 'traditional' a specially restricted meaning (as applied to 'the progressive and ever-increasing use of dissonance' in the history of music) and then ingeniously implying that this meaning is an essential part of the 'true' meaning of the word, thus persuading us to feel that Schönberg's music really is traditional in some objective way. This seems to me to destroy the word's practical value. For there is a generally accepted usage which applies it to the music of (say) Rachmaninov or even Vaughan Williams; and it cannot have any usefully precise meaning if it is to be applied both to Rachmaninov's and to Schönberg's music. But Mr Leibowitz has a special reason for calling Schönberg's music traditional; 'traditional' is for him a 'sweet-smelling' word and, if a thing is 'properly speaking' traditional, it must, he assumes, embody 'the essential principles of musical composition'. Throughout his article, he is in fact implying that the 'tradition' he is talking about is the 'true' one. However, only once does he openly say so; and, since we may easily miss this one occasion, he has disguised the subjectivity of his views very effectively. 'Being in the true sense traditional,' he writes, 'he (Schönberg) also became an innovator (innovation as we have seen being essentially a traditional quality in all great composers).'

I do not want, in making these comments on Mr Leibowitz's article, to suggest that the main content of his critical argument is valueless. On the contrary, I myself found it a most

illuminating exposition of Schönberg's theory and technique of composition as compared with that of (what I myself would call) traditional composers. In fact, the *information* it contains is excellent. And the valuations, coming from a composer-critic who clearly has this subject at his finger-tips, are also a useful expression of opinion. (I am not trying to be ironical in saying this.) But I think this opinion is misleadingly stated. For example, Mr Leibowitz mentions 'the fundamental and constant laws of logic, coherence and clearness applied to the organization of musical material'. He speaks of 'real' composers. And finally, he asserts that Schönberg 'has made the world aware of the authentic laws of musicianship'. To put it in a nutshell, he thinks that Schönberg's music is good. He has, of course, every right to state that that is his opinion, and also to give the reasons which helped to form it. But he seems to me to confuse the issue (and the unsuspecting reader) when he tries to suggest that this opinion is objectively valid – that he is assessing facts rather than expressing feelings.

The confusion which results from such pseudo-objectivity is the cause of a depressing amount of wasted time. I remember spending hours of my early life trying hard to understand certain kinds of criticism, feeling that, since it so confidently claimed to be packed with objective information, I could not increase my knowledge of musical values without learning it thoroughly. That, in itself, was pathetically wasted effort. And, what was worse, I kept finding that the objective valuations I had so painstakingly learnt from one critic did not quite fit with the valuations I learnt from others. Of course, I understood that critics naturally disagree on various points of *opinion*; but I was persuaded by them to believe that there must remain some coherent and universally accepted stratum of fact underlying all this superficial disagreement. And so I looked for it. I think there must be many others who have spent their energies in the same unprofitable quest.

ON READING A SCORE

GORDON JACOB



THE widespread interest in orchestral music, which was such a striking feature of the war years and which shows little sign of diminishing, has produced a great demand for pocket scores of standard classical works. At one time this demand was almost entirely confined to professional musicians and students, but it is now much more nearly universal. People want to see how the orchestral wheels go round, and are not content merely to allow the music to pour over them while they listen in a more or less dazed state. Present-day audiences, in fact, have become aware that music has an intellectual and technical basis and asks from its listeners something more than passive surrender to its sensuous appeal. It is unquestionable that even a slight knowledge of technique increases enormously the faculty of musical appreciation and sharpens the musical appetite.

It is, of course, too much to expect the average music-lover to be able to read rapidly through the score of an unknown work and hear it in his head, but the score of a known work is a different matter. It is a means of reliving musical experiences and of getting to know the structure and detail of a work. Music is never still, it moves continuously from point to point, and to most people repeated hearings are necessary before a total conception of an elaborate symphonic movement can be built up in the mind. Professional musicians (especially composers) and critics, who are quick to grasp the shape and content of new works, often complain of the countless repetitions of the same pieces in our concert programmes. Their attitude is exactly the opposite to that of the ordinary listener. They want new sensations because they are tired of listening to music in which they

know exactly what is going to happen next. He wants to hear his favourite pieces again and again because each time he discovers in them fresh points of beauty and interest. In this lies the reason for the formation of musical cults. Your dyed-in-the-wool 'intellectual' has no use for any music but the very old and the very new, while the ordinary listener likes what he knows, and judges any piece of music which he has not heard before by its approximation to or departure from the style of the things he likes. Both groups are mutually incomprehensible, and consequently despise each other a great deal.

But we seem to have strayed from the subject of score-reading. We have said that a slight knowledge is of great value, and that point should be stressed. It is not possible, nor is it necessary, for the amateur score-reader immediately to be able to read fluently in the unfamiliar clefs and transpositions which at first appear so puzzling, though his aim will naturally be to do so. As aids to memory the visual patterns of the notes and the entries of the instruments will serve him well enough, and though he may be unable to say off-hand exactly what notes the horns or violas are playing at any given moment he will see the sort of thing they are doing, and will thus be able to recall with a good degree of accuracy in his mind's ear the effect of the passage.

The first thing to fix firmly in the mind is the order in which the instruments appear from top to bottom of the page, so that it becomes instinctive to know the whereabouts of any particular instrument or group of instruments in the score. Clefs are a great help, for if one knows, for instance, that the bassoon parts lie chiefly in the bass clef, with occasional excursions into the tenor for high notes, they cannot be confused with the clarinets, which appear immediately above them and which use the treble clef exclusively, and the horns below, which are written almost entirely in the treble clef and only rarely descend into the bass. Key-signatures are also of assistance; for instance, in all classical scores and many modern ones no key-signatures

are ever used for horn and trumpet parts, and, except in the somewhat rare cases in which the clarinet in C (now obsolete) is employed, the key-signature of the clarinet will be different from that of the rest of the wood-wind and of the strings because the clarinet is, like the horn and trumpet, a transposing instrument, but unlike them always has its own key-signature.

This business of transposing instruments is perhaps the biggest bugbear of all. But in music of the classical period the horn and trumpet parts are so simple that the difficulty in reading these parts is more apparent than real. The old valveless (or 'natural') horns and trumpets were able to play only a very much restricted range of notes, and in consequence of this, though we may find them pitched in almost any key, their parts are always written in the key of C, and the simplicity of their parts makes it easy to transpose them into the key of the piece without very much mental effort. When we come nearer to modern times we find that composers settled down habitually to use the horn in F, but, though only one transposition has therefore to be made, the horn parts are much more elaborate and chromatic than they were formerly, and this creates some difficulty. Similarly, modern trumpet parts are nearly always in B flat or C, the latter, of course, not needing any transposition at all.

Parts for clarinet in A are always found to be more confusing than those for clarinet in B flat, which only need transposing a whole tone downwards, but as soon as transposition is thought of as one of key rather than of each separate note, the difficulty is greatly diminished. Some publishers have lately taken to printing scores with no transpositions, but until this practice becomes general, if it ever does, it remains necessary for readers of scores to face the task of becoming familiar with the normal transpositions to be met with in orchestral scores. If the reasons for the transposition of the parts for certain instruments are understood the reader is less likely to become irritated and confused by them.

The reasons are simple enough, and are historical. Horns and trumpets, as we have mentioned above, were formerly able to produce only a restricted number of notes. These were the upper partials obtainable from a fixed fundamental note. It was therefore necessary to change this fundamental note according to the key of the piece in order to get as many notes as possible in that key. It was found to be the most practical plan always to write the part in the key of C and to indicate at the beginning what note was to be represented by the note C in the written part. Thus if the key of the piece were, say, E flat, the horn or trumpet would insert his E flat 'crook', which would make the fundamental note E flat. Having done this, he would play from his part written in the key of C and the series of upper partials from E flat would be produced. It is obvious that this ingenious but simple method made things much easier for the player who thought in terms of upper partials or harmonics rather than in actual notes. The use of the key of C was thus a kind of Tonic Sol-fa method of writing, C or 'Do' being made movable by means of the crooks. The valve-mechanism now replaces the crooks and enables the fundamental note to be changed instantaneously, but the technique remains basically unaltered.

The reason for the clarinet transpositions is simpler. It was formerly extremely difficult, if not actually impossible, to play in any but the simplest keys on the clarinet. By using the clarinet in B flat for flat keys and that in A for sharp keys the clarinet part could always be written in a simpler key, i.e. one requiring fewer flats or sharps than the key of the piece. The use of the clarinet in C, which was employed for the keys of C, F, and G, still further ensured simplification of the key-signature. The C clarinet was later discarded. Its tone seems to have been inferior to that of the other clarinets. The clarinet can now play in all keys, but players still feel more comfortable in the simpler keys, at any rate if there are any elaborate solo passages to negotiate, and have therefore retained the B flat and A instruments, though we have been told that in America the clarinet

in A is becoming obsolete. In military bands the clarinet in A is never used in this country. Military-band music is, in consequence, almost always written in flat keys. The small clarinet in E flat is also used in military bands, and occasionally makes its appearance in very fully scored orchestral works.

With regard to the alto and tenor clefs, these should be mastered as soon as possible and should be read as freely as the treble and bass clefs. Methods of referring them to these well-known clefs and then applying various methods of transposition should be avoided. The direct method is always preferable to the roundabout way in the long run.

THE CLARINET AND ITS MUSIC

FREDERICK THURSTON



WHILE it is doubtful if there is much more to be learned about the music-making possibilities of the piano, the violin, or of the 'cello as solo instruments, it seems to me that the clarinet has still something that is yet unheard to give to the music-loving public.

The reasons why the clarinet has not been as fully exploited as those other instruments is perhaps because Bach, Haydn, and the other great founders of the classical school were unable to give it the good start it needed in its infancy. In their time it had only just been invented, and for very many years afterwards problems of intonation and mechanical difficulties were such as to preclude a high standard of technique. I often wonder what sort of performance Stadler gave of the Mozart concerto on the instruments available in his day. Whereas the violin has not appreciably changed for three centuries, it is only within the last hundred years that the clarinettist has had in his hands an instrument capable of executing almost anything a composer could write.

It took ingenious people, both musicians and mechanics from many countries, to develop the two-keyed instrument of 1700 to the twenty-four-keyed clarinet we use to-day. However, there are even now different systems of key mechanisms, but the Boehm system is the most widely used. By its aid, a fine artist can display a virtuosity with this instrument, in many ways comparable with that of the violin.

In spite of the fact that nowadays we have produced a number of players of very high standard, composers have little

inclination to write concertos or major works for the clarinet.

In England we have had a succession of players whose dexterity of instrumental technique has been matched by a richness of tone and beauty of phrasing of which we can be proud. The first name of consequence in English clarinet playing is that of Thomas Lindsay Willman, who was born in London in 1783. He came of a military-band family, and later became the principal clarinettist in the Opera, while still retaining a connection with the Coldstream Guards Band. Grove tells us that 'his tone and execution were remarkably beautiful, and his concerto playing admirable'.

We next hear of Henry Lazarus, who was born in London in 1815, and was also connected with a military band. He was appointed as second clarinet to Willman on most of his important engagements, and an old cutting from the *Illustrated London News* of 1843, which is in my possession, says of Lazarus that 'some five and thirty or forty years ago the clarinet was not known in this country as an instrument capable of "discouraging such elegant music as it is now universally acknowledged to be. ... Purity of tone, elegance, a happy fitness for all styles" have elevated our countryman Lazarus to the position of not only a principal clarinettist at Her Majesty's Theatre, but also to that rank in every orchestra throughout the kingdom where first-rate talent is employed. He need not fear any foreign competition. Anyone who has heard him perform the voice part of Haydn's divine air "With Verdure Clad" cannot much deplore the absence of words. He is vocal without their aid and delightful to the ravish'd sense! The school he has been reared in has been most prolific of genius.'

In 1890 George Arthur Clinton was appointed Professor of the clarinet at the Royal Academy of Music, following Lazarus, who died in 1895. Born in 1850, his career was very similar to that of his predecessor, as he, too, had an early connection with military bands. His genius for expressive playing soon led him into the orchestral world and to soloist status.

A link with these early players, who did so much to raise the level of clarinet playing, is provided by Charles Draper, who was born in 1868 and is happily still living. He was for very many years Professor of the clarinet at the Royal College of Music. I studied under him and had the honour to take his place at the College. Charles Draper's nephew, Haydn Draper, also had a distinguished career as a clarinetist. He was Professor at the Royal Academy of Music, and among his pupils was the well-known clarinetist Reginald Kell.

There had been many virtuoso players on the Continent, such as Richard Mühlfeld (1856-1907) whose playing inspired Brahms to write four clarinet works especially for him, a circumstance which gave rise to some of the loveliest music ever written for the instrument.

In passing, it is gratifying to note that European musicians have a very high opinion of English clarinet playing. For example, before the second World War Reginald Kell was invited to adjudicate the wood-wind playing at an important festival in Vienna.

Again, recently I played at the Festival of the International Society of Contemporary Music, which was held in Copenhagen. Afterwards one of the young Copenhagen clarinetists thought it worth while to come to London to study under me.

Now let us glance over the unfortunately rather limited repertoire of important works for the clarinet — the repertoire of concerto and chamber music. The earliest concerto is by Stamitz, who helped among others to prepare the way for Haydn in symphony and concerto. As one might expect, the musical idiom of Stamitz's concerto reminds one of early Haydn. The music has some passages of great beauty and is quite advanced in technical demands, but it lacks generally the inspiration that Haydn might have lavished had he seen fit to compose a clarinet concerto.

It was left to Mozart to realize the possibilities of the clarinet's unique tone-colour in his great Concerto in A Major. This was

written for Stadler, who was the first virtuoso of the instrument.

Spohr (1784–1859) wrote four concertos, and Weber (1786–1826) wrote two. All of these certainly extended the technique of the instrument, which by now had ceased to be a novelty in the orchestral world. The player for whom they were written was Heinrich Bärmann. A double concerto for clarinet and viola by Bruch, 1838 (which has yet to be heard in this country), has just been sent to me from Germany.

From this period onwards we meet with no other major concertos (although a number of works which must have been written in various parts of Europe have never reached us) until we come to Stanford (1852–1924), whose concerto has a definite flavour of Brahms. In fact, it was dedicated to Mühlfeld, principal clarinet of the famous Meiningen Orchestra, a player whom Brahms so devotedly admired, although later on Stanford, after some pressure, crossed the dedication off the full score. This crossing out can still be seen, as the work has never been published. When I played it recently, I used the original score written in Stanford's own hand. The individual and lyrical beauty of this work makes it all the more strange that it is so seldom heard.

Wagner, Busoni, Debussy, and the Danish composer Carl Nielsen wrote excellent works for clarinet, and within very recent years Milhaud, Rawsthorne, and Elizabeth Maconchy have all produced concertos, which test the skill of the player to the fullest extent. Milhaud's concerto is dedicated to Benny Goodman, and those of Rawsthorne and Maconchy are dedicated to myself.

In the sphere of chamber music the repertoire is much larger, but not as large as it deserves to be. The outstanding works which one calls to mind are Mozart's Trio, Quintet for clarinet and strings, Wind Quintet, and a great deal of 'small' music, *divertimenti*, and the like, in which the clarinet plays a prominent part. Among the works of Beethoven are a Trio, a Septet,

and a Wind Quintet. Schubert used the clarinet to great advantage in his famous Octet, and in his song *The Shepherd on the Rock* there is a notable clarinet *obbligato*.

Schumann wrote a Trio, also the *Phantasiestücke* for clarinet and piano, and I have a Sonata for clarinet and piano in manuscript reputed to be by Mendelssohn. Brahms provided a Quintet for clarinet and strings, which is one of the greatest works written for the instrument, and also a Trio and two Sonatas.

Reger wrote a quintet and three sonatas, Stanford a sonata and three *Intermezzi*, and Bartók a trio. The French have given us a number of sonatas for clarinet and pianoforte. From England have come quintets by Coleridge Taylor, Herbert Howells, Arthur Bliss, and Gordon Jacob; while John Ireland's *Phantasy Sonata* is slowly winning favour among the devotees of chamber music. Howells has written a sonata, the first performance of which I shall play very soon.

The modern Russian composers, of whom we hear too little in the Western world, ignore the clarinet very largely, while providing music for almost every other chamber-music combination. It is true that Prokofiev wrote a sextet, Glinka and Khachaturian a trio. Stravinsky wrote three pieces for unaccompanied clarinet; but a comprehensive list of the works of forty Soviet composers contains no mention of any sonata or concerto in which the clarinet is the unaided soloist

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It is surprising that more composers do not write for clarinet when one realizes the beautiful, singing qualities of the instrument and appreciates its great technical possibilities and range. There is probably a great deal of clarinet music which has a purely local fame, and of which I am unaware. For instance, the Stanford concerto is quite unknown on the Continent, while in England I have only just heard of similar works by the Danish composers Carl Nielsen, Herm D. Koppel, and Jorgen Benzon.

It has to be frankly admitted, however, that as a solo instrument the clarinet cannot be listened to for lengthy periods without the occasional relief of a change of tone-colour. But if this be admitted, there is no reason why the genius of any composer should not be poured into relatively short works for clarinet and orchestra. The clarinettist has at his command a big compass, and a variety of tone colouring; moreover, the dynamic power available is very considerable. Of course, it is obvious that a composer will get his music performed more frequently if he writes in the medium of the piano, the violin, the cello, or the orchestra.

Those who are fully familiar with the repertoire of the instrument know that it can fit into the satiric mood of a Milhaud or a Walton, the lyric tendencies of a Schubert or Brahms, just as well as it can reinforce the commanding tones of a Beethoven symphony; but since it is relatively seldom heard in recitals where these contrasting qualities can be heard in the same programme, many composers may have failed to realize the instrument's full range of virtues.

Another reason that may have tended to limit the repertoire has been the lack of virtuoso players. The tradition of outstanding violinists is of very long standing, and, moreover, innumerable text-books and systems of teaching exist to aid the violinist in attaining a high standard. There are teachers in all parts of the country, and in all countries of the world, and reasonably good instruments are obtainable everywhere, all conforming to the same pattern, to which the same technique is applicable.

In the case of the clarinet conditions are very different. The number of good teachers is few, and they are so busy performing that they have little time to spare for teaching, besides which the remuneration is usually not very high. Since the opportunities have been few, there has not been the same encouragement for soloists to devote years of their lives to the last touches necessary to give perfection to their technique. How-

ever, at the present time many fine natural musicians are studying the instrument, including a number of women.

I should be on somewhat dangerous ground if I ventured to say that perhaps a higher degree of musicianship is required from players of wood-wind instruments than from those who play, for instance, the violin. However, it may be mentioned that at all parts of the register, absolute control of intonation depends on the subtle muscles of the lips and the breathing tract; changes in temperature, and the like, affect the instrument in a manner that the string player is spared, and therefore wood-wind instrumentalists must be alert to the finest shades of intonation all the time they are playing.

What is needed to bring the whole range of the beauty of the clarinet to the ear of the music-lover is for composers to devote more time to the possibilities of the instrument. Before being daunted by the limitations put forward in Forsyth's book on Orchestration, they should consult the principal exponents of the instruments to see whether the difficulties which debar them from complete expression of their ideas could not in fact be overcome. In passing, one might mention that this has almost invariably been the case, since the modern technique knows few limitations indeed.

Finally, promoters and planners of concerts should realize that the present repertoire for the clarinet is not as inconsiderable as they may, without due consideration, imagine; programmes of a wider scope would offer encouragement to the younger players of the instrument to fit themselves for solo playing.

TIMPANI LURE

JOYCE ALDOUS

In a talk with C. B. Rees



I WAS always fascinated, from the first time that I heard a symphony orchestra, with the 'timps'. I wanted to be a drummer, after having studied the piano for seven years. I was lucky, for my father, thinking I was in the grip of a whim, bought me a set of drums and asked the drummer at the local cinema to give me lessons. I nearly drove everyone crazy. I drummed on everything in the house.

At the age of 14 I had a chance to play in a cinema in Weybridge – a grand experience, and later went to Bournemouth to play in a hotel. I had a fine opportunity in Bournemouth to listen to Sir Dan Godfrey's orchestra, and took lessons with his timpanist. I was so anxious to get into serious music that I decided to travel and hear foreign orchestras. I joined an American Ladies' Salon Orchestra; we toured the Continent for three years, and then went out to the Dutch East Indies, Malay States, and generally had a busy and enlightening time for three more years.

But how to get into a first-rate orchestra, playing serious music? That was my consuming ambition, but think! Women string players, yes; women wood-wind players, yes; but a woman timpanist, a lady drummer? Absurd, unheard-of! Perhaps I should never have managed it but for the war.

Back in Bournemouth from my travels, I was asked by Reginald Goodall to help him out, as his timpanist had been called up, and the Wessex Philharmonic Orchestra was in a difficulty. And so I got my chance, even though I had had no previous experience in an orchestra of this kind. I studied with him

every day for two years. He polished up my theory and harmony, taught me my programmes. I could not have been luckier, for he himself was a 'timps' player as well as a conductor.

After he was called up I met – about six years ago – the late Robert Singleton, who was a magnificent drummer, and taught me to play side-drum in a large orchestra. Then we joined the famous Hallé Orchestra together, and that is, briefly, how I came to occupy the position I now enjoy: a position which has caused many eyebrows to go up in many audiences all over the country when they have observed – at first, somewhat incredulously, a woman – a woman, mark you! – bending over the drums, tuning them, listening to them, and (I hope) giving them at the right moments the appropriate bangs.

I said 'bangs'. Many people may think that that is all you have to do – just bang away. But, of course, it is much more difficult (and absorbing) than that. To play side, or snare drum, involves constant practice: you must produce a good orchestral tone, a roll that is not 'crushed', as is that of some dance-band players. I shall never forget hearing native boys out East playing primitive instruments they had made for themselves – there were different-sized drums and tom-toms – and playing them with perfect rhythm and a wonderful sense of touch. There is a vast difference between just playing a percussion instrument and playing 'with touch'. It is also true of other instruments, of course.

At a rehearsal directed by a famous foreign conductor, the cymbals player picked up his cymbals and waited for his entry. The conductor asked him, 'And what do you think you are going to do?' The youngster replied, 'Play the cymbals, sir.' 'No, you are not,' the maestro said, 'you are going to make a noise like two pan lids.'

Yes, rather, the timpanist's job is extremely responsible. He – I mean, she! – must have a good ear, to begin with, for three or four drums have to be used at a time. Sometimes it is necessary to tune and pitch a note in one key when the rest of

the orchestra is playing in another – and this may have to be done in a split second.

And we can so easily mar orchestral playing. I have heard a conductor say of a timpanist, 'Yes, a good player, technically; he's correct, but he *muddies* the orchestra so.' A *crescendo*, a *fortissimo*, is different for string players in Brahms from what it is in Schubert. The same principle applies to the timpanist. A good timpanist has several pairs of sticks, small ones, large ones, with small and large heads, sticks for Mozart, sticks for Brahms – in fact, one can change sticks three or four times during a symphony to get the right tone and clarity. One must tend and cultivate one's instruments as if they were one's children, and the timsps certainly must not catch cold!

I like the story of that famous timpanist, said to be the finest this country has known, William Gezink, and a great artist. He was known to have a set of drums in his bedroom, and the first thing he did in the morning was to practise tuning. There is the example of the true and devoted player, the musician-at-heart.

Oh, yes, it's great fun being a timpanist, especially a woman timpanist. Audiences, however, are getting used to that strange phenomenon now.

VISIT TO PRAGUE

KENNETH ADAM



EVERY orchestra has attached to it someone, man or woman, who serves it devotedly, talks about it unceasingly, and hears scarcely a note of what it plays. The Czech Philharmonic is no exception. From the moment Mme Steiner met me one morning on the steps of the Rudolfinum – the old Parliament House of Prague – and led me through deserted foyers to the ‘balkon’, where I was to watch Raphael Kubelik at rehearsal, I knew that she was that person. The last sight I had of her, late the following evening, was as she shooed away persistent admirers from the young master’s door. A patient, harassed, even cheerful little woman combining in at least a fourteen-hour day the jobs of secretary to the Orchestra and personal assistant to its conductor. How much music owes to these unsung faithfuls! Mme Steiner is kept busier than most of her kind, because the Czech Philharmonic is nationalized now, and that means lots of forms to fill up, while Kubelik is probably the most travelled conductor in the world – more forms, and think of the currency problems! Last winter he was in Milan, London (for the performance by the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra of Smetana’s *Má Vlast*), Belgrade, Brussels, and Scandinavia. She adores him, of course, but is by no means alone in that. When your conductor combines looks and a figure better than Stewart Granger’s with a veteran’s command of a vast repertory, and an attack at once persuasive and audacious, it is small wonder that he is the darling of a musical city like Prague. To walk from the Rudolfinum to Lippert’s, the best (because Government-subsidized) restaurant in the capital, with Kubelik for lunch, is to engage in a triumphal procession. Girls nudge each other, and gaze with

shining eyes as he passes. Men doff their hats in greeting. In a country ridden by acrimonious controversy, it is heartening to find such enthusiasm for an entirely unpolitical figure. And the pleasantest thing of all is that the young god is so human – and so unspoiled. He talks eagerly of his baby – his violinist wife steals a couple of hours from home for his principal concerts – of pub-crawling in Britain, of Neville Cardus, and clothes, and travelling by air. Being a civil servant does not worry him. He remembers his father's talks of the bad old days when the Orchestra, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1946, had a hard fight to keep alive. For five years conductors and members went without fees, and finally had to go out into the restaurants to give popular concerts in order to get the money to play symphonies. (Jan Kubelik was the Mæcenas of the Orchestra at one time.) Now the future of the Orchestra is assured by the State, while the public can have a subscription for the eight concerts of the winter season at a price ranging from £1 10s. to £2 10s. Or, if they are students, they can stand in the organ loft, facing the conductor, for 1s. 6d. a time. Eight concerts really means sixteen for the Orchestra, because the Rudolfinum holds only 1,500 people, and each programme is repeated the next night.

As an ensemble, the Czech Philharmonic is spirited and often impressive. Individually, the sections are not particularly distinguished. Clearly, the atmosphere among the players is excellent. They are caught up and translated by Kubelik's enthusiasm and eloquence. At rehearsal they were attentive and disciplined. According to Continental practice, the leader is given no prominence, even sits inside, his deputy nearer the audience. What I heard was a monster Slav programme. Most of them are. No English work was played in the winter season. We began with a suite of Zelenka (1679–1745), unearthed by Kubelik himself, who is determined to resurrect the forgotten works of the time of Rudolph II, when Prague was the most important musical city in Europe. This was delightfully naïve,

with a Follia to end like a cheeky hornpipe. Then came Shostakovich's Piano Concerto, played by Vondrovič, a doctor in charge of a heart sanatorium at Podebrady in the hills, who was on a few days' leave. This is typical of Czechoslovakia to-day, where everybody works so hard that an averagely assiduous Englishman feels a drone by comparison. The doctor's performance was carefully diagnostic, lacking perhaps in the sense of humour the work demands, but impeccable technically. Then came a Sinfonietta by Petrželka, conducted without a score. Petrželka is in his late fifties, a follower in the Novák school of solid, architectural composition. He was present, and took two solid bows. I found the piece attractive in a brash manner. The noise was clearly to the audience's liking. But for sheer volume of sound we had to wait until after the interval (when everyone packed into the single smoking-room for a puff or two at an American cigarette which cost at least 7d.). The second half consisted of Suk's *Praga*, a splendidly programmatic piece in which the very sticks and stones of Prague materialize. Suk, who died in 1935, was Dvořák's son-in-law, and pursued his melodic path. But he was influenced by the decay of romanticism and by the Schönberg experiments. *Praga* has to be heard in its native city to be appreciated fully – the *pianissimo* lyrical opening, the elaborate orchestration, the fantastically noisy ending, with everybody sawing and blowing and plucking like men possessed (women do not appear to be able to stand the pace in Czech orchestras), and the organist pedalling like a champion cyclist. It is a civic anthem, and more than that, a Slav gage, thrown at the world's feet. The Czechs, by the way, are sparing in their use of the national anthem, which is said to mean much more to them because it is heard so seldom.

Besides the Czech Philharmonic, Prague has two symphony orchestras of merit, the Fok (an abbreviation for Film-Opera-Koncert, which indicates its wide scope), and the Film Orchestra, which played for the Sadler's Wells ballet last autumn. Talich, at one time conductor of the Philharmonic,

has been, it is said, under a political cloud, but is making an irresistible come-back. The radio orchestra, which I heard rehearsing under an American, is a vigorous and versatile combination. The director of programmes at the Prague station is Dr Očadlík, a musical historian and a very gay creature. He it was who took me to the National Theatre to see Foerster's opera *The Merchant of Venice*. Foerster is 87, and has recently married again – a very grand old man. The production was outstanding, the singing, with the exception of Marta Krásová as Portia, only adequate. She was at the New York Metropolitan and at Dresden, and there is no mistaking her style. The *metteur-en-scène*, Thein, had solved the eternal problem of what to do with the chorus so as to prevent their getting in the way of the action, most ingeniously. In each scene he used curved platforms, differently disposed, which the chorus manned, becoming either spectators or participants in the story at the producer's will. These arcs also carried a suggestion, throughout the opera, of Venetian bridges, which was entirely appropriate (see illustrations). Side, not front, lighting was employed to achieve a full-dimensional effect. But for me the most charming moment of the evening was the final curtain, in which Antonio and Shylock shook hands and swore lasting friendship!

No lover of music can be dull or unemployed in Prague. There is another Opera, called the *Theatre of 5th May* (the day of the Prague rising, in 1945), which is more *avant-garde* than the National Theatre. Dr Holzknecht, the pianist, is at home to anyone who wants to see over the famous State Conservatoire of Music, and Prof. Zelenka, only surviving member of the Czech Quartet, is Rector of the newly-founded Academy of Musical Arts, which, it is planned, will give the more gifted Conservatoire students higher training. Then there is the Smetana Museum, a lovely old rococo building on the banks of the Vltava, the Dvořák Museum, with its magnificent wrought-iron gateway, where, among other things, you may see proudly

displayed the Ll. D. robes which Oxford bestowed on the composer, and the Villa Bertranka, where Mozart lived when he was finishing *Don Giovanni*. You can even ring the bell which summoned him to meals from the little room with the barred windows that he loved.

Dear Golden City, set between East and West! It is no coincidence, I think, that the oldest spiritual folk-song in Europe came, in the twelfth century, from Bohemia, or that it is a prayer for peace and quiet in the land.

THE ITALIAN SCENE

EDWARD LOCKSPEISER



THE first impression one has of Italian musical life is that it is almost exclusively the work and the creation of the Italians themselves. The vast network of operatic activity stretched throughout the leg of Italy from Catania in Sicily to Venice in the north is Italian, the singers are of course Italian; and as one glances through prospectuses of orchestral societies, chamber-music organizations, concerts of contemporary music and festivals, one is impressed by the fact that all this is run by and for Italian musicians. I should say that the musical life of Italy is more conspicuously a national product than the musical life of any country in Europe. Taking a bird's-eye view of the teeming Italian scene, there seems to be little infiltration from abroad. It is not a cosmopolitan musical life such as one knows in London, or Paris, or Brussels; foreign musicians who have visited Italy in the past have stood or fallen by native standards. The numerous German conductors and instrumentalists who have visited Italy before and during the war never succeeded in imposing a foreign tradition, nor have the Italians shown any inclination to assimilate an outside influence. Musically, Italy considers herself self-sufficient. More than that she is an exporting country, as indeed she has consistently been since the seventeenth century, providing the Opera Houses of the world with her famous singers, and able to provide, too, spectacular conductors and instrumentalists.

The four principal Opera Houses in Italy are La Scala of Milan, the Teatro S. Carlo in Naples, La Fenice in Venice and the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome. Here the seasons normally open on Boxing Day and continue until the Spring. The current

season at La Scala is under the imaginative direction of the impresario Mario Labroca, and opens with a new production of Verdi's *Otello*, conducted by de Sabata, with new stage sets by Nicholas Benois. Ramon Vinay, a discovery of Toscanini's, makes his first appearance in the title part. The imposing list of twenty-five spectacles ranges from *The Barber of Seville* and *Don Giovanni* to Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. Ballets, too, will be given, notably Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*, which has not been staged since the days of Diaghilev, and Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*. Operas to be given during the season include Bellini's *Norma* (with Maria Caniglia), Puccini's *Turandot* (with Lucia Turcarno), and Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* (with Elizabetta Barbato). Particular interest is attached to the new opera *Le Baccanti*, of Ghedini, one of the most prominent of the contemporary Italian composers, and also to the first Italian production of Prokofiev's *Love of the Three Oranges*, based on the tale of Gozzi and known chiefly by its excerpts, the March and Scherzo. La Scala is also giving a production of *L'Elisir d'amore* (with Margherita Carosio and Tito Schipa) to mark the anniversary of the death of Donizetti.

At Rome at the Teatro dell'Opera (formerly the Constanzi theatre) the productions of particular interest are Cimarosa's *Matrimonio Segreto* (with Alda Noni), Bellini's *I Puritani*, Weber's *Oberon* (with Gabriella Gatti), Respighi's *La Fiamma* and *Salammbô*, a new opera by Franco Casavola. At La Fenice at Venice, where the artistic director is Serafin, the season opens with Verdi's *Falstaff*, and Naples brings a sumptuous production of Rossini's *Mose*.

For the benefit of English listeners the Italian radio normally broadcasts opera from one theatre or another on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Occasionally there is a Sunday matinée broadcast. In the summer Rome broadcasts a season of studio operas.

Of the principal Italian orchestras performing at regular concert series, the general opinion in Italy is that the Scala orchestra is the best, with the Rome Radio orchestra as a

second. The reputations of the Turin radio orchestra, the S. Cecilia orchestra in Rome, and the orchestra of the Maggio Fiorentino are about equal. Only the two radio orchestras have permanent conductors (Rome, Fernando Previtali – and Turin, Mario Rossi). The S. Cecilia Orchestra was long conducted by Molinari, and is now frequently conducted by de Sabata. The Florence Orchestra had Igor Markevitch as their permanent conductor during the war, and is now, like the S. Cecilia Orchestra, conducted by various people.

One is chary, however, of accepting a definite hierarchy amongst these orchestras; the quality depends as always on the conductor, but particularly in Italy where orchestral players with their five or six rehearsals for each concert are considered to be especially responsive. What is immediately noticeable is the delicacy of the wood-wind and brass; according to English or French standards they would seem to lack brilliance, but they have instead a remarkably intimate quality, usually a smallish tone and a beautiful *cantabile* style. The Italian recording of Amadio playing the Mozart Clarinet Concerto is an example of this instrumental style at its best. The S. Cecilia Orchestra has an outstanding oboist of the same type in Scotti, and there is an excellent Italian flautist named Tassinari.

The Choirs of the Vatican are in a sad state of decadence, owing chiefly to lack of adequate financial support. The personnel of the choirs at St. Peter's, S. Maria Maggiore and S. Giovanni in Laterano are combined to form the choir of the Sistine Chapel conducted by Lorenzo Perosi on occasions when the Pope officiates. The best members of these choirs are, however, incorporated in the 'Piccolo Coro Polifonico' of the S. Cecilia Academy conducted by Bonaventura Somma, a secular mixed-voice choir performing sixteenth-century sacred and secular music with great intensity of expression. This is by far the best choir in Italy. Milan Cathedral is the home of Ambrosian chant and Gregorian chant is sung in Rome at S. Anselmo and S. Paolo.

Nineteen-forty-eight will bring the eleventh of the festival held in Florence, known as the 'Maggio Musicale Fiorentino' to be held from April to June at the Teatro Communale, the Teatro della Pergola and the Boboli Gardens. The festival will be under the direction of Pariso Votto, who takes over from Mario Labroca, now artistic director at La Scala. To mark the anniversary of the Risorgimento, an early and seldom performed opera of Verdi, *I Lombardi*, will be given, as well as the one-act opera of Donizetti, *Il Campanello*, and Malipiero's *Sette Canzoni*. A marionette company will give Debussy's *La Boîte à Joujoux* and Falla's *Master Peter's Puppet Show*. An oratorio of Perosi will be given at S. Croce, and Furtwängler will conduct two orchestral concerts with the Maggio Fiorentino orchestra.

The Venice Festivals of contemporary music will be continued this year where it is planned to give either Berg's *Wozzeck* or *Lulu*. Two concerts of the orchestral works of Debussy will be given to coincide with the exhibition of French impressionist painting, to be conducted by Monteux, and there is question too of giving Vaughan Williams' *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*. One of the new one-act operas by Petrassi, *Dalla-piccola*, or Riccardo Nielsen will form the latest Italian contribution, and there will be a performance of the oratorio *Scena Festante* by Vivaldi, one of the numerous works of Vivaldi still in manuscript in the Turin library and forming part of the complete edition of Vivaldi's works to be brought out over a number of years under the general editorship of Malipiero.

At Siena, at the Palazzo Chigi, in September there will be an annual festival of old music devoted this year to the works of Galuppi and Vivaldi. The Siena Festival has something of the position in Italy of Glyndebourne. Each year operas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are given in a small theatre under the patronage of Count Chigi with the best Italian singers and instrumentalists. The opera scheduled for this year's performance is Galuppi's *L'Amante di Tutti*, and

some of the unknown works of Vivaldi will also be given. Perugia has an annual festival of sacred music in September, bringing the oratorios of Carissimi and Rossi.

Other forthcoming events include a series of intimate opera to be given at La Scala with a small audience seated on the stage. Here Labroca has been inspired by the venture of the Hamburg Opera House which was destroyed during the war, and could therefore only give these small operas in this way. The season will commence directly after the main Scala season, and will present operas of Monteverdi, Vecchi, Vivaldi, Scarlatti, Falla, and Stravinsky. In March there are plans to give Verdi's opera, *La Battaglia di Legnano* – a work having associations with the Risorgimento.

Farther ahead plans are being made for festive celebrations connected with the Holy Year, in 1950, and the fiftieth anniversary of Verdi's death in 1951.

Taking a general view of the vast activity of contemporary Italian composers, there would seem to be three main schools: the contemporary composers of the older generation, of whom Pizzetti and Malipiero are the main representatives (Casella, who died last year, has still many interesting works not yet known in this country, notably his *Paganiniana*); composers of operas such as Alfano who still follow the tradition of Puccini; and the younger school of whom the main representatives are Luigi Dallapiccola in Florence, Geoffredo Petrassi in Rome, and Ghedini in Turin. Dallapiccola has in recent years adopted the twelve-tone system of Schönberg – one of the solitary instances of a foreign influence in Italian contemporary music. Undoubtedly he uses this system in a style all his own, and his new opera *Il Prigioniero* based on the tale of Villiers de l'Isle Adam, *La Torture par l'Espérance*, is a most sensitive work with wonderful declamatory passages and big violent choruses. There is question of its production at La Scala during the 1948–49 season. Another example of twelve-tone Italian music is the opera *L'Incubo* by Riccardo Nielsen, based on a tale of

Petrus Borel ('The Nightmare'). Petrassi is writing an opera on a libretto of Cervantes to be called *La Ruffiana*. Other composers worth watching are Roberto Lupi, the head of a school known as the 'Gravitationists'; Luigi Cortese, composer of an oratorio *David*, conducted by Erede at Genoa; and Guido Turchi, a pupil of Petrassi, whose chamber works include a trio for flute, clarinet and viola and *Invettiva* for two pianos, female choir and nine instruments.

TERMINOLOGICAL EXACTITUDES

DENIS STEVENS



NEW friends of music are often taken in hand by their elder and more experienced colleagues, and duly exhorted to learn a little theory, not with a view to becoming a musical grammarian, but rather a connoisseur – one who knows what is what, or at least what is happening. In music, too much is happening at any given moment for mortal ears completely to comprehend, but those who seek to confirm and strengthen what they hear, by learning the gentle art of score-reading, will soon double the pleasure they get from every single concert. That is, if they leave the score at home. During the event, it is something of a distraction. Have they ever noticed the way in which a conductor turns over five or six pages at a time? Even he finds the turning-over troublesome.

At home, the score can give a slow-motion picture of the music. Whatever is happening can be traced to cunningly aligned specks of ink, a notation stable since the sixteenth century, and so intrinsically artistic that one wonders why on earth people want to reform it. Some advocate a return to tablature; but they have obviously not seen the seventeenth-century album of keyboard music belonging to the Jungfrau Regina Clara Im Hoff, or Hans Newsidler's book of pieces for the lute. The first looks like a test paper in Outer Mongolian shorthand, while the second bears a suspicious resemblance to a game of noughts and crosses.

No, the reformers should expend their energy on the words, not the notes. I mean the polyglot vocabulary of Italian,

German, French, and English which litters our scores, confusing players and connoisseurs alike, though serving to clarify the meaning of the notes by referring to orchestration, expression, and even characterization.

Alzate sordini! says Tchaikovsky at one point in his *Sixth Symphony*. But he is more than justified here in telling his players exactly when to take their mutes off. If they drop them, the extraneous percussion which results will be covered by a loud wood-wind passage. Yet such care in marking is unusual, for a string player, according to the customary Italian stage direction, is either with a mute, or without one: there are no half-measures. Accidents may happen even among the best-conducted musicians, and if Tchaikovsky was aware of this, so was Sir Henry Wood, when he recommended the use of spring-clip mutes which fastened on the music desks. Now, players prefer the type which can be placed on the ear when not in use, or secreted in the mouth. For musicians who prefer the latter course, one might arrange to have their mutes made of candy, like Tocolotl Xixcan's flute, which he consumed when his recital was over. Sometimes, as at daybreak in Ravel's second *Daphnis and Chloe* suite, the players take off their mutes one by one, thus causing a gradual change in tone-colour. Sixteen years later, Sibelius got the same effect in *Tapiola*, using less than half as many words as Ravel: he simply put *poco a poco senza sordini*.

Directions invariably become condensed as the effect they govern slowly gains a hold. Monteverdi, in a book of madrigals dated 1638, asks for long and soft strokes of the bow. Nowadays we just say *flautando*, and tend to forget his pioneer work, with the possible exception of the long phrase he used to describe *pizzicato*, which made its debut in the same book. But it was an Englishman, Tobias Hume, who perpetrated the first *col legno*, when he wrote in his *Musicall Humors* (1605): 'Drum this with the back of the bow.' A more truly recent string trick is the method of producing rapid *arpeggios* of natural harmonics

by 'stroking the string with the tip of the finger'. Ravel seems to have coined this phrase in 1908, when his *Rhapsodie Espagnole* was first performed, though two years later Stravinsky used the same device in his *Firebird*, enjoining the 'cellists to slide on the second string'. And, presumably to avoid a deliberate and undignified misconception by the more athletic members of his orchestra, he added a footnote saying that 'by stroking the string with the finger, the harmonics will come out automatically'. How naïve, and how like a child with a new toy!

But it is doubtful whether Stravinsky ever bettered his charming direction to the tambourine player at the end of *Petrouchka*, where he asks his man to 'hold the instrument near the floor, then let it fall gently'. Yet we have much earlier instances of the percussion section's struggle for independence. Turning again to Tchaikovsky's *Sixth*, we find at a climax in the *Scherzo* that the cymbals player is requested (in Russian and German) not to fasten the cymbals to the bass drum. Perhaps, during a visit to England, Tchaikovsky had had the misfortune to hear Costa's version of the National Anthem, in which the bass drum and cymbals together were struck as loudly as possible on the first beat of each bar.

Berlioz, however, whose *fortissimi* have been called brutal, was most careful where cymbals were concerned. In the *Menuet des Follets* from *Faust* he suggests that 'one cymbal (be) held up by its strap and struck with a sponge-headed drumstick'. The same device may be seen, and heard too, in the *Overture Les Francs-Juges*. Felt and flannel heads are generally used now for soft effects of this kind.

Brass players also have their moments. When the Manfred theme returns towards the end of the first movement of Tchaikovsky's symphony 'in four pictures', all four horn parts are marked *fff Pavillons en l'air* – and perhaps in case they are German horns: *Stürze in die Höhe!* Klenovsky, just before the final cadence of his notorious orchestration of Bach's *Toccat*

and *Fugue in D minor*, simply puts 'bells up'. Contrast the lengthy dissertation provided by Strauss for the benefit of the trombone players in his *Death and Transfiguration*: they usually manage to read it in time, however, and gradually raise the bells of their instruments above the desks.

In matters of *tempo* and dynamics, Italian is the language most frequently met with, though Telemann, a contemporary of Bach, was early in the use of German and French expressions. In England, composers were conservative enough to use the accepted Italian terminology, even at the risk of making a mistake. When Purcell wrote the preface to his *Sonatas of III parts*, he was 'not asham'd to own his unskilfulness in the Italian Language', and went on to define several of the terms he intended to make use of. One of them is *Presto Largo*, which he demurely tells us is 'a middle movement'. A pity there was no Percy Grainger then who could cut the Gordian knot by writing 'louden lots' instead of *crescendo*!

Liszt once or twice referred to a 'crescendo of rhythm', which seems a most odd phrase until we see the context – a footnote found in several of his symphonic poems. In *Orpheus* and *Hungaria* the note appears thus: 'The letters R ... and A ... signify slight Ritardandi and Accelerandi; a gentle crescendo and diminuendo of the rhythm, so to speak.' Once more a case of abbreviation, and one which Elgar found it convenient to use at times. A glance at his *Second Symphony* will reveal not only R and A written throughout the score, but L also, which stands in place of *Largamente*. One might call them attempts at *rubato* of phrase or sentence, in contrast to the *rubato* which is used within the rhythmic structure of the bar. Once again Monteverdi shows himself to be the true pioneer, for we find in his *Lament of the Nymph* (Eighth Book of Madrigals) an enchanting preface which directs the performers to sing the lament 'with regard to the feeling, not to the hand which beats time'.

The real exactitudes, though, are seen in examples of musical

characterization, when the music itself declines (quite rightly) to lower itself to the nadir of glorious technicolor, and the composer is bound to help his would-be interpreter by adding remarks in the score whenever necessary. Thus Richard Strauss sees fit to bolster up Till's roguery by a generous sprinkling of suitable epithets; and we have him now yielding, now burning with love, here raging, there frivolous. Verbal onomatopœia enhances the critics in *Heldenleben*, where they are *scharf und spitzig*, but the prize goes to certain wind instruments in the *Sinfonia Domestica*. Thinly disguised as aunts and uncles, they exclaim 'Just like Mama' or 'Just like Papa' when the baby is brought in to be admired.

Scriabin's approach to evocative music was quite different. He started by asking for a performance which was *voluptueux*, full of *émotion et ravissement*, and finished by writing *divin, grandiose, sublime*, which as Taneiev quite rightly pointed out was one way of making sure that one's compositions will have nice things written about them. Yet he was not so despotic as Florent Schmitt, who never tires of stating that 'dynamics must be rigorously observed', nor was he as amusing as Erik Satie, whose commentaries are among the most delightful ever penned. They are always so perfectly appropriate. In his piano piece *Sur une lanterne*, he writes: 'Nocturnally: don't light up yet - you've still time!' And in the *Tyrolienne Turc* he has at one point *très turc*, which is most apt. Of course, the titles themselves are priceless, but we must confine ourselves to remarks in the text. After all, even Rossini wrote a *Hygienic Prelude for Morning Use*, and peculiar titles were well known long before the time of Satie.

He had a keen mind, nevertheless, and could see the ridiculous side of some of Debussy's markings, as did the man who wrote a piece called *The Evening of a Lamb*, which is crammed with odd French expressions in the Satie vein. Not even a scholar of Tovey's calibre could leave such things alone. In his *Companion to Bach's Art of Fugue*, he prefaces a few bars of

chromatic harmony with the words *Langweilig und schamlos* (tedious and shameless), declaring it to be the Tugendqual Motif from Wagner's unwritten *Tantris und Solide*. Inverted, the extract resembles the prelude to *Tristan*, duly marked *Langsam und schmachtend*, which goes to show, says Tovey, that 'anything that sounds no better right-side up than upside down will do for an up-to-date piece of totally invertible counterpoint'. Or terminologically speaking, *contrario motu*.

CHAMBER MUSIC: AN IMPRESSION

JOYCE ATKINS



WE are waiting for the Blech Quartet. The hall is filled – almost to capacity. The audience is eager and expectant, though there is none of that tense excitement which precedes an orchestral concert. The stage is large, dark, and silent. In the centre of it is a standard lamp, diffusing a pale yellow light over four prim chairs.

The musicians enter. With the possible exception of Harry Blech himself, they do not look at all like musicians. They might be business men or diplomats. They acknowledge, rather solemnly, the applause of the audience, and take their places; Harry Blech looking too big for his clothes, too big for the chair, too big for the tiny violin in his hand; Lionel Bentley pale, slim, and neat like an immaculate swallow; Keith Cummings modest, quietly sincere; Douglas Cameron firm and solid as the Forth Bridge.

They begin with the Schubert Quartet in G minor. For the first few minutes you are only conscious of the exquisite sound of real violins after months of wireless and gramophone. You had forgotten how lovely they were. You absorb the sound into your being as you absorb mountain air, and luxuriate in it. Then gradually the mind begins to pick out the themes, while the eye performs the function of a motion-picture camera. Shutting out everything else, it focuses on Harry Blech's violin. As he bends and turns it catches the light, and above two pools of shimmering radiance you see the bow moving with beautiful precision over the strings, and the white hand with fingers

curling and pressing, and now the dark, passionate head leaning over the instrument like a dreaming lover.

Behind sits Douglas Cameron, the impassive Scot, calm, dignified, and unemotional, tenderly hewing out ecstasy from the great glowing 'cello. The eye focuses on his hand with its flexible, muscular wrist until you can feel the long-drawn notes, as though they were part of the rhythm of your own existence.

While the mind follows Schubert's lyrical melodies, the eye switches its attention to the audience. To the elderly lady darting a glance of venom at the gentleman who can't stifle his cough. To the child in the next seat, round-eyed and absolutely still. To the young girl trying to look as intelligent as the intelligent, bespectacled young man beside her. To the second-rate violinist, dreaming of his début at the Albert Hall. To the muscular young lady who has recently 'taken up' the 'cello, and is wondering what Douglas Cameron has got that she hasn't. On the whole the audience is happy. Schubert is easy and pleasant. They know that a storm is coming in the shape of a new quartet by Benjamin Britten, but they are going to enjoy the sunshine while it lasts.

With just the right amount of flourish, the graceful quartet is brought to a conclusion, and the musicians leave the stage. In the audience there is some apprehensive speculation about the nature of the Britten quartet, which nobody has heard before. 'They say it's nothing to the one by William Walton. ...' 'I can't say I care for this modern music – so much noise and *scraping*. ...' 'Arthur says most of it's rubbish, my dear, and I think he's quite right. ...'

The mother of the small child says, rather eagerly: 'Would you like to go home now, darling?' The child replies with a laconic 'No', and turns away, screwing up her programme in her hand, impatient for the music to begin again.

The musicians return, there is a rustle of programmes, and somebody is heard to remark with relief that thank God it has only three movements.

So we begin our voyage of adventure into the unknown realms of the *Quartet in C major*, No. 2, Op. 36, by Benjamin Britten. And here is, indeed, a new world – as far removed from Schubert as is Picasso from Constable. Several members of the audience, instead of listening with patience and an open mind to what Britten is trying to say, simply sit and fume with indignation because he has not used the language of Schubert. These people take up a similar attitude in foreign countries when they come across hotel staff who do not speak English. They seem to be under the impression that Britten has spent his life studying and composing music for the sole purpose of annoying them, and take it as a personal affront. Two maiden ladies turn to each other and grimace, as if they had set out to attend a lecture on 'The Path of Peace', and inadvertently strayed into a meeting of the Communist Party.

Of course the music is not easy – especially for people who have been nurtured on Schubert and Brahms. But it is new, it is original, and it has a compelling vitality which keeps the listening mind awake and alert. To those of us who are contemporary with Britten, it is not so difficult. It is, in a way, an expression of our own conflicts. We understand its feverish haste, its discord, and its jagged rhythms. We can appreciate its rather bitter humour. We know its language by instinct rather than learning. We feel at home among the sharp, angry little notes which seem to tear themselves from the strings and jab at us like painful memories returning to sting the mind out of temporary complacency.

At last it is over – a memorable performance of a difficult work. The audience is enthusiastic, if slightly bewildered. Little groups of people gather together, and the hall hums like a hive of bees.

'A bit odd, wasn't it?'

'Like rheumatism. ...'

'Like a train coming in, I thought. ...'

'Like insects crawling about, my dear. ...'

'It makes you wonder how he puts it together. ...'

'And what did you think of it, darling?' asks the mother of the small girl, with facetious eagerness, hoping to get an amusing reply which she will be able to relate to her friends the next day. The child replies, with simple conviction, 'I like it' – and is silent.

Disappointed and a little resentful, the mother turns away, annoyed because the child has already gone somewhere where she will be unable to follow. And looking at that quiet, serious little face, it is difficult indeed to suppress a feeling of envy. Over on the left sits the local music critic, wrinkling his forehead in furious concentration, trying to think what will be the correct thing to say, and one cannot help wondering whether he has understood half so well as the child, whose mind, unhampered by prejudice, unclouded by worry and responsibility, has received the music directly as the earth receives rain.

PERSONALITY CORNER

C. B. REES



It is an unnerving experience to be riding in a car with a man (driving) who in the middle of the traffic in Kensington High Street insists on telling you, with appropriate gestures, the difference between the way in which Toscanini, Boult, Furtwängler, and Barbirolli take the slow movement of Schubert's *C major Symphony*.

But anybody who has had a trip in a car with FREDERICK THURSTON knows what I mean. 'Jack' (nobody calls him Fred or Freddy) is the complete refutation of the notion that the orchestral player is, apart from his specialized skill on his particular instrument, devoid of interest in and knowledge about æsthetics. He is, I think, the most articulate orchestral player I have met. He is not now an orchestral player, having left the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, of which he was principal clarinet, to devote himself to solo work and to play chamber music. But for most of his life to date he has been an orchestral player, and a very brilliant one. As a clarinettist there is no need for me to discuss his quality. His reputation is established – and it is still growing. You can almost hear it growing.

He is a personality of a rare order. He is short, strong in body, tough of physique. His arm muscles owe a good deal to golf, and in a rough house I would rather be on his side than against him.

You don't have to start a conversation, or a dialectical dispute, with Jack; it has already started, by spontaneous combustion. I am sure he was born talking. Talking good sense, too. I remember many interesting nights with him and half a dozen of his orchestral colleagues, in Bedford during the war, when

the B.B.C. was stationed in that charming town, when 'the maestro', as his playing pals dubbed him, with slight, affectionate iconoclasm, used to hold forth with untiring eloquence and much clever miming on conductors, players, singers, Brahms, John Ireland, politics, the Press (with special spicy bits for music critics), his companions in the orchestra, and a multitude of other (sometimes less intellectual) subjects. It was excellent fun, stimulating, at once grandly genial and cunningly barbed.

He is a good listener, too, when interested, breaking in upon you now and then with a grip on your arm that makes you wince and a flow of disputatious propositions that sends you scuttling into the recesses of your mind for fresh ammunition.

Jack has, too, a comic gift. His mimicry alone would keep any audience in fits of laughter. His anecdotes are packed with humour, and he can cap any of your smoking-concert yarns with a better – and worse!

Behind that James Cagney countenance there is a fertile, avid brain, the brain of an artist who lives intensely, works with fierce concentration, and relaxes with complete naturalness and spontaneity. He undergoes agonies of self-criticism after, and is as fidgety as a monkey before, a performance. If you want to know something about an artist's 'nerves' when he has an important job on hand, Jack Thurston will reveal them to you if you happen to be around at the time. *Chacun à son goût.*

Music is his passion, not only the clarinet; although his devotion to that instrument is much more than a professional preoccupation. He is not a comfortable person with whom to go to a concert when he is (in the orchestral players' phrase) 'out in front'. He winces and wriggles and squirms and mutters at bad playing, slovenly conducting, obtuse misinterpretation: an almost morbidly 'sensitized plate'. Equally, his enthusiasm and delight over first-rate work attain to an explosive gusto, and he will be exuberant all night over a Toscanini performance of a Beethoven Symphony, until you are ready to drop with the fatigue his own inexhaustible energy produces. But to

Masters of the Clarinet

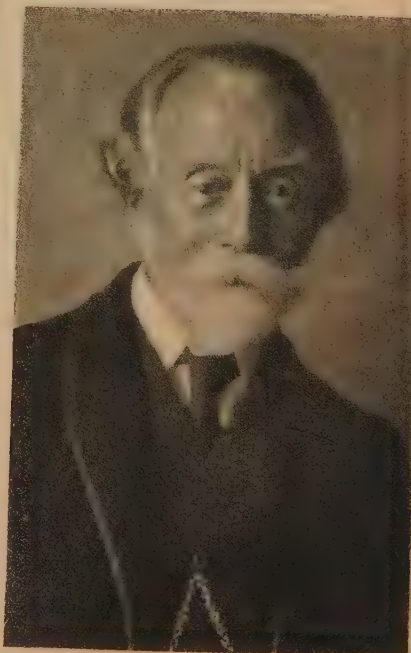


T. LINDSAY WILLMAN (1783-1846)

A portrait gallery of great players of the clarinet to illustrate the article on page 32 by Frederick Thurston, in which he discusses the instrument and its repertoire.



*HENRY
LAZARUS
(1815-1895)*



*JULIAN
EGERTON
(1848-)*

**GEORGE
CLINTON**
(1850-1913)



**RICHARD
MÜHLFELD**
(1856-1907)

*for whom Brahms
wrote four important
works. (From a Renoir
portrait.)*



*CHARLES
DRAPER
(1868-)*

*FREDERICK
THURSTON*

*On page 64 C. B. Rees
writes: 'Behind that
James Cagney countenance
there is a fertile, avid
brain, the brain of an
artist who lives intensely,
works with fierce con-
centration ...'*





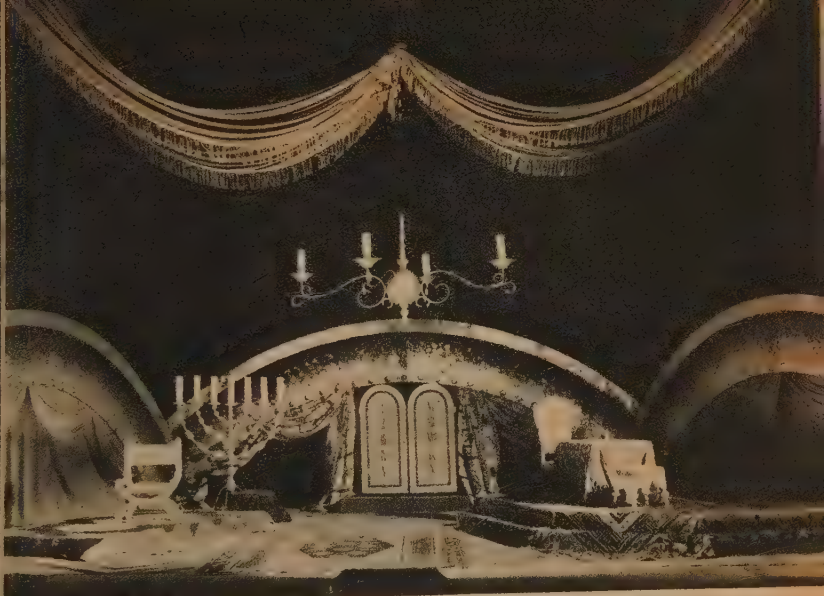
REGINALD KELL (1906-)

VISIT TO PRAGUE

Kenneth Adam visited Prague and heard Raphael Kubelik conduct the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and saw Foerster's opera 'The Merchant of Venice'. He describes his impressions of the visit on page 42.



RAPHAEL KUBELIK



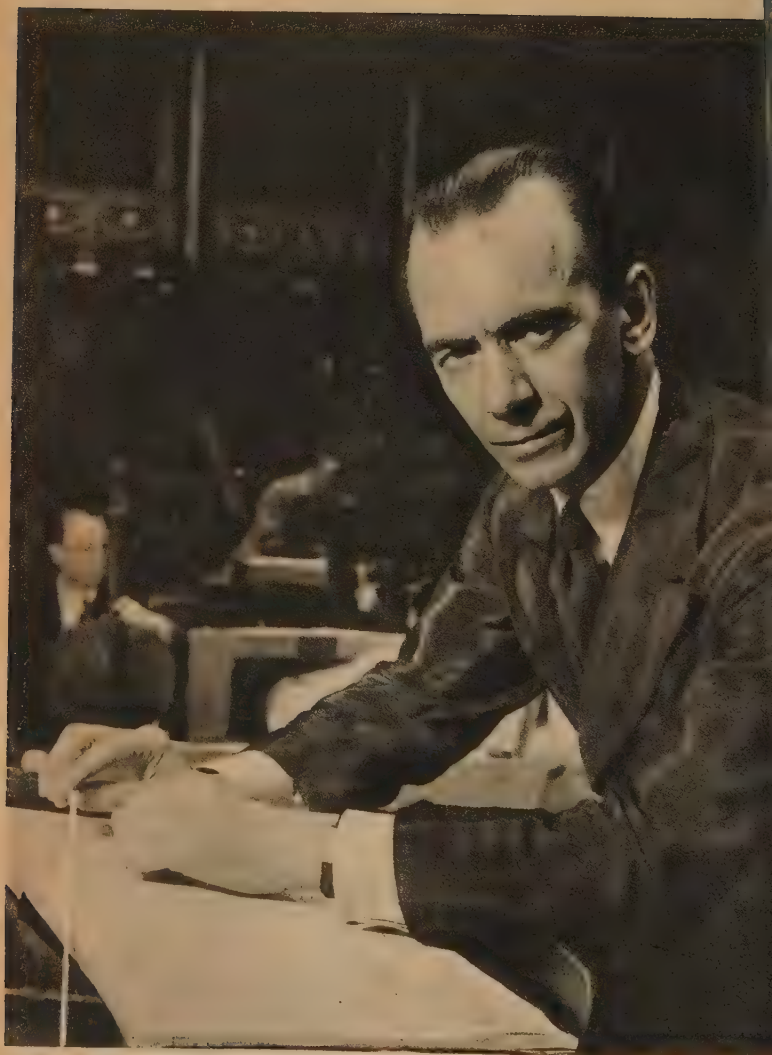
Shylock's House—Act 2

Décor for Foerster's 'Merchant of Venice'

The Court—Act 3



PERSONALITIES



Sir MALCOLM SARGENT – a pause in rehearsal



JOYCE ALDOUS, tympanist of the Hallé Orchestra. In an interview with C. B. Rees on page 39, she tells how she took up the timpe.

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

The Second Company in 'Valse Nobles et Sentimentales'



Donald Britton

Michael Boulton

Anne Heaton



The ballet is based on Ravel's exquisite series of little dance movements of the same title. It is conceived in terms of pure dancing and Frederick Ashton's choreography might be described as variations on the simple steps of the waltz. The décor and costumes by Sophie Fédorovitch provide a delicate study in claret, rose and pink – an effective counterpart to the music and dancing.

Roun

*Verdi's
'Rigoletto'
at
Covent Garden*



*Kenneth Neale
as the Duke of Mantua*

*Elda Ribetti
as Gilda*

*Paolo Silveri
as
Rigoletto*



*Mozart's
'Don Giovanni'
at the
Cambridge Theatre*



*Daria Bayan
as Serlina*

*Bruce Boyce
as Don Giovanni*



*Italo Tajo
as
Leporello*



Gounod's 'Faust' at Sadler's Wells



The fine setting for the village scene in Act I



Howell Glynne as Mephistopheles



James Johnston as Faust

In the Sadler's Wells 'Faust'

Roderick Jones as Valentine



Marion Lowe as Marguerita



be fair, he is also a vitalizing force in any company he keeps.

Of course, he can be 'difficult'. And he can be moody when tension slackens. Nor does he pretend otherwise. 'I'm fed up,' I have heard him say, as he gloomily swallows his beer, complaining also about its poor quality! But next day, the mercury has risen again, and you meet him overflowing with good spirits, eyes alight, profusely gesticulatory, physically and mentally irrepresible. I can never get home in decent time on those occasions!

The knighthood conferred on MALCOLM SARGENT was as coincidental as made no matter with his debut as one of the three principal conductors of the fifty-third season of Promenade Concerts. There is no doubt about his popularity or his competence. He gets excellent playing out of the orchestra, and the 'boys' enjoy working with a man who knows all the tricks. The energy and quickness of his mind are phenomenal. That shrewd critic of men and things - Paul Holt - told me that he was fascinated by the whirligig speed with which Sir Malcolm Sargent, as we must now call him, thought, and talked, and moved. He has suffered illness which would have put most men out of action permanently, but he survives to be more dynamic than ever. You wonder how that slim, trim, lath-like frame contains the tempests. The taut face, the keen, dark eyes, the staccato barrage of talk, the sweeping gestures, the controlled hurry of the walk - these tell unmistakably of the charged batteries of zeal and gusto, which multitudinous engagements all over the country - and, indeed, very nearly all over the globe - do nothing to reduce. He will rush you to his hotel for a discussion, lunch, Press interview, photograph, and then, by the time you have returned, exhausted, to your office a couple of miles away, he will be restudying *Belshazzar's Feast* in the train for a performance two hundred miles away within twenty-four hours. He is the whirlwind of our musical life.

He is good company, has met all kinds of people in all parts of the world, tells a story with relish, and is never at a loss – and his Brains Trust appearances made clear – for an answer. Choirs everywhere love to sing under his direction, for he is animated, easy, stimulating. He can vitalize the dullest choir – and bring the best out of the best.

He never seems to grow older. His hair is as thick and black as it was years ago when he came to a Prom concert at Queen's Hall, at the invitation of Sir Henry Wood, to conduct his *Impressions of a Windy Day*, and thus to begin a career as a conductor that has won him a big place in the life of our time.

Perhaps he has the secret of perpetual youth. Not a bad thing for an interpretative artist to find – and keep.

BRAINS TRUST

JULIAN HERBAGE



Q. Why is it necessary to 'arrange' old music (e.g. Bach and Handel), and are such arrangements an improvement, or otherwise? (S. J., Liverpool.)

A. First of all, we must get clear on the difference between 'arrangement' and 'transcription'. Transcription may be likened to the art of translation. It consists in transferring a composer's thought into another medium. The new medium has different characteristics, different sonorities, in fact a different technique of expression, so the work, if it is to express the composer's full intention, will have to be modified – even elaborated – to suit the new medium. Many musicians have attempted to translate Bach's organ works into orchestral language, and their excuse may well be that organists do not play the originals well enough, or often enough, or to a large enough audience. As Bach himself was a notorious transcriber – his Concerto for four pianos is a transcription of Vivaldi's Concerto for four violins – there should be no purist objection to this procedure. It merely stands or falls on the artistic standard with which it is carried out. Generally it falls, as there are not many composers possessing the ability of Bach, and even the composer-student fancies himself as a transcriber.

There is, however, another problem in connection with early eighteenth-century music. The basis of instrumental music in those days was the keyboard instrument, which supplied much of the harmony, and of which the written-out part consisted simply of the bass, underneath which were figures indicating the harmonies to be supplied during performance. Even in Haydn's days this keyboard *continuo*, as it was called, was an

essential part of the orchestra. More often than not the composer sat at the *continuo*, filling in the harmonies by extemporization, and in chamber music, particularly, these extemporizations would often be very elaborate. The few examples that were written down – an *aria* in Bach's cantata *Amore traditore*, for instance – show what was expected of an accomplished musician when playing an accompaniment. Then, also, a singer or solo instrumentalist, especially in a slow movement, was given by the composer merely the bare outline of a melody, and was expected to ornament it to the best of his musical ability and technique. It was by the quality of his extemporization that his musical ability was judged.

In early eighteenth-century music, then, the composer merely wrote out the skeleton of his composition. The rest was provided by extemporization at performance. Nowadays this art is no longer practised, and is lost. To-day the composer writes in his score not only every note, but indicates every nuance, and expects the performer to adhere to the minutest of his instructions. Performers nowadays play only what they see written out, and hence the need of the 'arranger', who supplies what was formerly executed by improvisation. The arranger may also have to be something of a transcriber as well, translating the part of an obsolete instrument such as a harpsichord into parts for more modern instruments.

Such 'arrangements' are a utilitarian process made necessary by the changing styles of musical performance. They can hardly be considered as improvements, they are simply a necessity. Often unwarrantable liberties are taken, but these can be justified only if the arranger is at least as great a musician as the composer whom he is 'arranging'.

Q. George Bernard Shaw said that every profession is a conspiracy against the laity. Does this apply to music critics? (L. J. B., London, S.W.19.)

A. Most musical executants will tell you that music critics are

a conspiracy against their profession. No one likes a critic, unless one happens (temporarily) to agree with him. The critic is searching for the perfection he never, or only rarely, finds. The public goes to a concert, and either enjoys itself, or doesn't. It is therefore suspicious of the critic who tells it that what it has liked is bad, and what it didn't like is good. The public, too, is on the whole conservative, liking the things it knows, which it describes as knowing the things it likes. The critic is often so relieved to hear something he doesn't know that his relief tempers his critical judgment. Many works have been lauded to the skies for the sole merit of being novel. The public resents this particular aspect of critical conspiracy, and resents being badgered into buying British, for instance, when it much prefers Beethoven. But the critic knows that music cannot stand still, and that the classic of to-day was the revolutionary of yesterday. He may back the wrong horses – what tipster ever made a fortune, except by selling his tips? But he must still be the gadfly of the musical public, and by bullying them to know a little more music, may eventually persuade them to *like* a little more.

Q. Is it a fact that a tune which sounds commonplace in the major gains greatly in dignity when transposed into the minor, and is the effect produced by the substitution of the minor for the major third physical or psychological? (R.W.S., Portsmouth.)

A. There seems to be an implication here that all major tunes are relatively commonplace, and all minor tunes have dignity. Let me dispose of this first, by quoting as examples of major tunes Handel's 'He was despised' and the Dead March from *Saul*. No more dignified utterances have ever been created in music, and Handel, in particular, when he wished to express the most profound emotions, always used the major key. As to the minor key, in the time of Purcell it was often used to portray amorous sentiments, as in 'If Love's a Sweet Passion' from *The Fairy Queen*.

Domenico Scarlatti was one of the first to exploit the contrast obtainable by playing a phrase in the major and repeating it in the minor, but one could hardly say that such phrases sound at first commonplace and then dignified. Nor do they even sound at first gay and then pathetic, and it was only at about the time of Mozart that the minor key began to possess to the full the attribute of pathos. Mozart, in his Symphony No. 40 in G minor, introduces his second subject, in both the first and last movements, in the major, later repeating it in the minor. In this minor repetition he enhances the pathetic effect by an increased use of chromatics. Here, I think, we find a psychological reason for the pathetic character of the minor key. We subconsciously associate the flattened third with some primitive wail or moan of anguish. The first three notes of 'Three blind mice', for instance, sound plaintive when played in the minor.

Beethoven developed this plaintive aspect of the minor key into tragedy in the openings of the *Coriolan Overture* and the C minor Symphony. But in the C minor Symphony, after we are prostrated by the tragedy and anguish of the first movement, Beethoven turns to the major for spiritual strength and consolation. His melody is anything but commonplace, and nothing if not dignified. We find these same emotions, but expressed in reverse order, in the opening of Elgar's *First Symphony*. The broad opening melody in the major possesses spiritual dignity, while the following *allegro* in the minor seems filled with physical anguish. It would seem, therefore, that in music from Purcell to Elgar, the minor key has mainly been associated with the physical and the major key with the spiritual.

Such generalizations, however, are associative, and do not seem to be based on any physical qualities of sound. The associations themselves change with the course of time. Plato condemned the Greek Ionian and Lydian modes as being debauched and effeminate, though no one hearing them to-day would be

conscious of these attributes. Similarly, the theme of Tallis on which Vaughan Williams based his meditative *Fantasia* for double string orchestra is in a mode which Tallis described as suitable for the expression of rage and anger. Music is an art which, more than any other, depends on changing conventions and associations, and therefore any statement that a tune gains dignity when transposed into another key or mode can be true only of particular instances in a particular period of musical history.

NEW BOOKS



Mozart: His Character, His Work. Alfred Einstein, translated by Arthur Mendel and Nathan Broder. Cassell. 16s. net.

The Symphonies of Mozart. G. de Saint-Foix, translated by Lesley Orrey. Dennis Dobson. 8s. 6d. net.

Mozart's Operas: A Critical Study. Edward J. Dent. Oxford University Press. 16s. net.

THE ever-changing fads and fashions in the interpretation of the significance of a great composer's music unfortunately tell us much more about the faddists and fashionable interpreters than about the composer's music. Take, for example, the case of Mozart. 'It is a curious thing,' says Edward Dent, 'that Mozart, the bicentenary of whose birth is within ten years of its celebration, should have become the most popular classical composer of the present day. Fifty years ago his reputation was rather faded, although Hans Richter is said to have prophesied that he had a great future before him. The nineteenth century began by adoring Mozart as the fashionable novelty; within a few generations it had established him as a classic, and it ended by relegating him for the most part to the schoolroom as a composer of sonatinas for little girls to practise.'

To-day Mozart is being established as a full-blooded romantic, and human drama is read into his music where no drama exists, except in the romantic mind of the interpreters. Think of all the nonsense that has been already written about the significance in Mozart's music of the key of G minor: the key of tragedy, yearning, striving, struggling ... and pseudo-musicological poppycock.

Indeed, as Alfred Einstein says: 'With Mozart especially the relation between life and art-work is quite obscure and mysterious. There is therefore no special merit in the fact that no

writer has yet tried to connect the composition of the D minor String Quartet (K.421) with Constanze's giving birth to her first son, which took place while the quartet was being written down – although (I speak ironically) the minor mode might easily have been seized upon as a point of contact. And the fact that Mozart composed the G minor Symphony in the summer of 1788, when he was making the most touching appeal to his friend Puchberg for help, is also, fortunately or unfortunately, not a plausible excuse for claiming “reciprocity between art and life” – for, if matters indeed went very badly for Mozart before July 25, when he finished this symphony, did they go very well before June 26 and August 10, when the E flat major and C major Symphonies were completed? Mozart was again in a desperately bad situation in the last months of 1789, and yet it was at this time that he composed *Così fan tutte*, a work of purest happiness and creative bliss.’

It is indeed surprising to read Mr de Saint-Foix's eulogistic appreciation of the ludicrous purple-patch excesses of that Russian nobleman, Alexander Dimitrievich Oulibicheff (1791–1858), to whom ‘fell the honour of having attempted the first “musical” biographical study of Mozart’. Apparently the neo-romantic interpretation of Mozart can be traced back to Oulibicheff, who claims that ‘the G minor Symphony, like the quintet in the same key, expresses the disturbance of passion, the longing and regret of an unhappy love, but it expresses them with the difference that here we have a plaint concentrated, in the depths of his own soul, or at most suffered vicariously through the sympathy of a friend, on a grief without reserve and without bounds, bursting in the face of the whole world, which it would fill with its lamentations.’

Mr de Saint-Foix's own writing is on the whole singularly free from such sentimental figments of imagination. He writes on Mozart's Symphonies and their development from the first tentative efforts in the Italian style of John Christian Bach to ‘the final great trilogy’, which gave Mozart a place

beside the two or three greatest symphonists of all time, with scholarly understanding and with a strong, but pleasing personal style. Not the least valuable part of this interesting study is the background giving the sources of and influences on Mozart's ever-changing symphonic and orchestral styles.

First-class scholarship certainly produced the books of Edward Dent and Alfred Einstein. Of course, many of us have been familiar for years with Mr Dent's masterly critical estimate of Mozart's operas, which was first published by Messrs. Chatto and Windus in 1913. Mr Dent points out that in revising this book for a second edition he has felt happily compelled 'to consider an entirely new class of readers, a younger generation which, thanks mainly to the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells, has learned to enjoy Mozart's operas in the English language.' Mr Dent has cut out what he calls 'large quantities of dead wood', and has brought his book up to date in accordance with modern historical research. The opening chapter, 'Mozart as a Classic', is entirely new. It sums up the change of outlook on Mozart, which has taken place during the present century.

While Dent and Saint-Foix concentrate their attention on single aspects of Mozart's art, Alfred Einstein examines the whole of Mozart's art against the wide and significant background of the composer's own personality and environment, the aims and achievements of his contemporaries, and the social scene. Mr Einstein's book is as thorough and as readable as one would expect from his previous books on musical subjects.

Albert Schweitzer: The Man and His Mind. George Seaver.
A. & C. Black. 18s. net.

One of the most astonishing intellects and personalities of our time is Albert Schweitzer, who during his lifetime of seventy-odd years has left a deep and indelible mark in the worlds of philosophy, theology, medicine, and music. At the age of 28

Schweitzer was appointed Principal of the Theological College of St Thomas attached to the Strasbourg University, but two years later he decided to give up this permanently sheltered intellectual life, to take a medical degree, and go to Equatorial Africa in answer to the urgent appeal for more and more doctors to tend the sick and disease-ridden natives.

George Seaver tells us how Schweitzer 'spent the next six years of his life as a medical student in the university which he had adorned by his learning as a Professor. Coincidentally with his attendance at lectures in Medicine, he continued for the first four months to deliver lectures in Divinity. But in addition to this, he preached almost every Sunday: undertook the organ part of the Paris Bach Society's concerts each winter, as well as those of the Orféo Català in Spain, employing the time back and forth between Strasburg and Paris or Barcelona in composing his sermons; and accepted several other concert engagements in France and Germany, in order to make good the loss of his stipend as Principal of the Theological College. At the same time, too, he was writing his Essay on Organ-building, and the final chapter of his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, and actually completed his first work on the history of Pauline doctrine, *Paul and His Interpreters*, during his first few years as a medical student – as a feat of sheer will-power alone, there is something almost superhuman about this.'

The story of Albert Schweitzer's superhuman struggle to establish and run a jungle hospital and his ultimate triumph is the story of the working of an indomitable will of a great and gifted humanitarian.

'When in Africa he saves old niggers; when in Europe he saves old organs.' Schweitzer has saved innumerable old organs, on the mechanism, construction, and use of which he is an authority. He is continually at war with those philistines who demand every possible modern device and the maximum number of stops on an electric organ, in place of the less spectacular but infinitely more beautifully toned old organ that has

been made by the hand-craftsmen of centuries ago. Schweitzer says of these philistines: 'With an incredible blindness they tear out the beautiful old works of their organs, instead of piously restoring them with the care they deserve, and replace them with products of the factory.'

Mr Seaver's chapters on 'Organs and Organ-Building' and 'Music: and the Music of J. S. Bach', in relation to Albert Schweitzer, in addition to a number of interesting odd references to music and musicians in other parts of his book, should appeal to music-lovers.

Bruckner, Mahler, Schönberg. Dika Newlin. King's Crown Press (Agents: O.U.P.). 20s. net.

The Viennese school of composers, which began with Schubert and continues with Schönberg and Alban Berg, by way of Johann Strauss, Bruckner, and Mahler, lays claim to a line of *great* music which is by no means generally agreed upon by English music-lovers.

Schubert we obviously accept as a great master without any doubt. Many of us are loth to accept the 'Waltz King' in such illustrious company. Most of us consider Bruckner's symphonies to be boring and long-winded – indeed, the 'symphonic boa-constrictors' Brahms called them. Most of us can appreciate the sincerity of Mahler and his extraordinary mastery of the orchestra, but we are repelled by the triviality of so many of his melodic ideas. Finally, very few of us are prepared to accept Schönberg as a great composer, but only as a great innovator traversing a road that may or may not lead to Paradise.

However, there is no question about the fact that although Bruckner and Mahler are the essential links between Schubert and Schönberg, we know little about them. Performances of their music have been rare, scores have been difficult and ridiculously expensive to obtain, and gramophone recordings are practically negligible (Bruckner's Seventh Symphony, the Mass

in E minor, and the String Quintet; Mahler's Fourth Symphony, *Song of the Earth*, *Lieder Eines fahrenden Gesellen*, and *Kindertotenlieder*; and a few odd movements from the symphonies of both composers are about all the material that is available, at least in England.

Furthermore, there has been little really well-informed criticism, with the exception of a few desultory articles by Dr Mosco Carner, on Bruckner and Mahler, that might help us to understand and approach their music from a sympathetic and right point of view.

Dika Newlin's book should fulfil this demand. It is a splendid study of the backgrounds of Bruckner, Mahler, and Schönberg, and of the distinctive characteristics of their technical methods and creative origins. The picture of musical Vienna during the period roughly from 1850 to 1933 is of genuine historical importance and interest. The author approaches the historical, musical, and psychological sides of his subject with a welcome lack of partisanship (which is the chief weakness of the Bruckner-Mahler propaganda) and with a keen sense of objective values.

Dika Newlin stresses the chief influence of Austrian popular music on the melodic idiom of the Austrian school of composers, particularly Bruckner and Mahler. Here is a relevant quotation: 'The factor of racial mixture, particularly when the Austro-Bohemian strain is taken into account, is of special importance because it brought about the introduction into the Viennese style of provincial folk elements. Such elements are much in evidence in the minuets of Haydn's symphonies which often have the character of Austrian peasant dances. Here it is possible to trace a direct line of descent from the eighteenth century to more recent times. For the early scherzos of Bruckner's symphonies, too, spring directly from peasant soil. This is no fanciful analogy; it is a definitely established fact that Bruckner, in the insignificant Upper Austrian hamlets where it was his lot to teach as a young man, was much in demand as a

fiddler at rustic entertainments. The spirit of the peasant dances was transferred to the scherzos of his symphonies, contrasting strangely with the grandiose organ-like passages of baroque inspiration. And it is not in Bruckner alone that this nineteenth-century Austrian version of the transfer of folk-dance material to the symphony may be found. Mahler, too, utilized the rhythms and in some cases the melodies of Austrian and Bohemian folksong. In connection with what has already been said of the Slavic strain in the eighteenth-century Viennese school, it is well to remember that Mahler was born on Czech soil, in the little Bohemian village of Kalischt. In the slightly larger town of Iglau (Jihlava) to which his parents later moved he was exposed not only to folk-music but also to the Austrian military music. At the age of four he is said to have known by heart most of the tunes played by the military band at the barracks in Iglau. This earliest childhood experience of music undoubtedly had something to do with the predilection of the symphonist Mahler for martial rhythms and tunes, though not nearly so much as some of his over-zealous biographers would have us believe.'

This explains why so many of the melodic ideas of Bruckner and Mahler (especially Mahler) are so trivial and commonplace. For my part I see no virtue in the influence of Austrian popular music, which is childish in conception compared with the popular music of say, Russia, Czechoslovakia, or Rumania. I am reminded of that gang of impudent adolescents that called itself *Les Six* after the first World War, and scoured the Parisian gutters for popular songs to give their music a 'national' and, presumably, 'democratic' flavour. English and American composers might well have soaked themselves in the banal produce of Tin Pan Alley.

Is this charge against Bruckner and Mahler unfair? Perhaps, but it is a point of view worthy of consideration.

RALPH HILL

Theme and Variations. Bruno Walter. Hamish Hamilton.
16s. net.

This is a strangely unimpressive account of the activities of an impressive public figure; it might even be described as an unintelligently compiled book about a highly intelligent personage. That it is written by the man himself is a fact which perhaps ought not to have led us to expect as fine and subtle a literary sense as we know the musical sense to be in his case. But the fact remains that having expected possibly too much we are by so much the more disappointed at being fobbed off in this way with so little. And yet the story of Bruno Walter's long life should make enthralling reading, for it is rich in contacts with great minds, or failing those with important people, it brings the man in touch with significant events in art and politics — all those matters that provide the stuff for a good book.

As a boy Walter was gifted and precocious, fortunate in his parents who seem to have combined a light hand on the reins with the right ideas about infant prodigies; fortunate also in his teachers. The decision to give up the pianoforte as a career in favour of conducting came to him after watching Bülow. From that moment there seems to have been no turning back. From the Stern Conservatoire in Berlin he went to his first post as *répétiteur* at Cologne when he was barely 17. Not many years later he went to Hamburg, and there took place the meeting between him and Mahler, the man who was to become the greatest influence and remain the finest memory. Mahler's treatment of the young man appears to have been exemplary, sending him away to another post when Walter had learned all he needed in his present position rather than keeping him, as he might have done, as a fervent acolyte. Later the two men were to work together in Vienna; and it is these pages of his autobiography, which describe the state of music in Vienna at the turn of the century and in particular the attitude of Mahler towards the production of opera, that are among the most valuable in the book.

By then Walter had become an acknowledged master of the conductor's art. Although his first god had been Wagner (he took the name Walter with its echoes of Stolzing, of von der Vogelweide, of Siegmund), his sympathies appear to have been broad from the start of his adult working life and to have reached as far as the first quarter of this century. They certainly included Sullivan's *The Mikado* at one period. Or may that have been just the young conductor taking everything as it came? After Vienna there came Munich and the First World War. By that time his fellow countrymen, discovering that Jewish blood was more distasteful than fine interpretations of music were gratifying, began to murmur. And so he turned to the more liberal Austria, and when that gave way, to London, Paris, and New York. And on page 290 he gives his considered opinion of the propriety of adopting as soon as this a conciliatory attitude towards Germany. That is a saddening paragraph. But is it not understandable that a man who has been as close as he to the beastliness of totalitarian tyranny should have few illusions? He believes that the first *rapprochement* will be effected by means of art, but asks for caution yet awhile. In the meantime he has come back on visits to Europe, as we in London and in Edinburgh recall with pleasure. It has been a remarkable life, and the telling of it should one day make a remarkable book.

One is led to suspect that this autobiography must have had its edge worn away in translation. Which is not to say that its teeth have been drawn; they are there though their bite is not particularly keen. This is not a book of the toothsome sort; the nastier forms of backbiting are eschewed, the teeth seldom bared. But at least one fairly lengthy passage of well-sustained interest, the description of a dangerous journey in a storm-tossed 'plane, has the rhythm of the better type of reporting; and this, with memories of the original version of Bruno Walter's book on Mahler, suggests that the original German text of this volume is probably as full of verve as the English is

lacking in it. It seems incredible that a man who on the platform of concert halls and at the desk in opera houses (and more than that, at rehearsals) has appeared so alert could write these trite descriptions of places he has seen and people he has met.

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FOREIGN PERIODICALS

An article by Pizzetti in *La Rassegna Musicale* (Rome, July 1947) on the cultural aspect of music has that peculiar authority which belongs to the pronouncements of a creative artist. Not that such pronouncements are, by their nature alone, profound. But Pizzetti has for many years been journalist as well as composer. This fact accounts for the capable way he puts his case, which is for better education of the public in musical taste. Riccardo Bacchelli details at some length, though not altogether without amusement for the reader, how he studied Rossini without knowing music; perhaps not a very difficult business to undertake when one considers how fluent the mass of musical dilettanti can be on the subject of opera. There is an admirable necrological article on Manuel de Falla by Alberto Mentelli.

An informative article by Guglielmo Policastro in the *Rivista Musicale Italiana* (Milan, January 1947) gives the results of his researches into the life and works of the seventeenth-century Italian composer Ottavio Catalano (to be found in Eitner under Catalani), a document for connoisseurs. In the region of contemporary affairs Pizzetti's latest opera *L'oro* is described and discussed at generous length, an article that might well be of use to a reader furnished with the score to which it continually refers. A necrological article on Casella is contributed by Ettore Desderi.

Two short letters from Manuel de Falla in *Musica* (Rome, January 1947) are useful material for biographers; and still more revealing are excerpts from his will, or rather from what appears to be a last message dictated on his death-bed. The highly

interesting matter will be found on page 43 of this issue. There is interesting information to be gleaned from an article by Guido Anchini dealing with the history of the music of the Sistine Chapel.

The June number is worth while if only for five lines from Sibelius in answer to a questionnaire (sent to most of the great or well-known living composers) asking what works he had written during the Second World War, and whether the war had any special influence on his music. Sibelius replies (the present translation is from Italian, therefore presumably at two removes from the original): 'Pray accept my sincere thanks for your kind letter which has reached me after some delay. In reply to your questions I must tell you that I have not published anything during the war and that political events have never exercised any influence upon my art.' Edward Dent's paper on Purcell (read at the *Oro di musica* conference in Rome last May) is to have a reply: from what quarter is not clear, though it may come from Warsaw since Chopin is spoken of as *l'eterno errante senza patria*. The article by René Leibowitz succeeds in dissipating some of the fog that surrounds Twelve Tone music.

Bach. Eva Mary and Sydney Grew. J. M. Dent. 7s. 6d. net.

Handel. Percy Young. J. M. Dent. 7s. 6d. net.

(Both in the 'Master Musicians' Series, edited by Eric Blom.)

Whoever sets out to write the life of Bach or of Handel is faced with perspectives that intrigue the mind, captivate poetic vision, and lead nowhere that truth lies. It is hard in turning such lives into readable books not to substitute for the few known facts a romantic, not deliberately or even essentially untruthful, but wholly misleading description of the man and his life-history. Of these two books, the one on Bach does that and fails to convince; the other eschews it and succeeds in holding our attention.

To get the best from Eva Mary and Sydney Grew's book on

Bach and to see what the authors can do in the way of spirited writing and illuminating comment (in both of which they show undoubted prowess) the reader is advised to turn to the description (page 99) of the Leipzig choristers, their duties, and (here romance begins to enter, one feels) their proclivities for the material and unseemly side of existence; in that last, so like twentieth-century choir boys, say we, so unlike, say they. It is an instance of their aptitude for branching off into imaginary by-ways that offer pleasant prospects but lure the unwary off the high-road.

Bach's life is sparsely documented and it is natural that enthusiasts for his music, eager to discover the springs of creation in such a master and having so little of human interest to go on, should at times allow fairly liberal (and sometimes unfairly free) play to surmise. This book has a deal of that in it and should be read with care. It is all very well to say: 'Long before he was fifteen Sebastian was tired of Ohrdruf and eager to be away. He was tired of it because he had exhausted it.' But how do we know? That sort of thing leads to the plethora of conditionals later in the book. 'Perhaps he entered intimately into Buxtehude's family. Perhaps he discussed the situation with them ... If he did, Buxtehude would talk of ...' and so on, in a way that leads simply to more wishful thinking. One shares the author's desire for more information about Bach's life, but not their ready acceptance of the results of genial guesses and airy suppositions. Even predestination, that most questionable of doctrines, is invoked. 'And, as ever, the opportunity came exactly when it was essential for his artistic well-being that it should come.' What happened was that Bach's mental development having progressed in a certain direction and approached a certain point he instinctively took advantage of everything that furthered his aim. Bach was not in the hands of some fate that led him through the house of life opening doors for him. Bach decided for himself what doors to open and when to open them, as he decided at this moment that he was ready to move

from Weimar and to enlarge his orchestral technique. He waited, refused an organistship at Halle, still waited, and then took Cöthen where there was an orchestra.

Whoever writes about Handel finds himself dealing with material which from the outside appears to be as clear and straightforward as the music itself. But the writer soon discovers that this is not the case, that Handel's life is by no means as transparent as a superficial hearing of his music might lead us to expect and indeed to wish. As a matter of fact, Handel's life-history is strangely obscured for so commanding a public figure. Every writer has had some slightly different perspective to offer. I'm not certain in my mind about everything Dr Young says. He is sound on the *Water Music*, dismissing that pretty and silly tale of a reconciliation with George the First at the river party; and he delights me by suggesting that the fashion of standing for the Hallelujah chorus 'might quite well now be discontinued'. But he accepts the old story of young Handel travelling to Italy with a shadowy companion, who is supposed to have defrayed the costs of the journey, a certain Herr von Binitz, of whom, as Professor Dent says, nothing is known. I suspect that Dr Young has accepted too easily the testimony of Mattheson, who knew Handel, was a lively writer, but not a dependable historian. Dr Young treats that pertinacious journalist with almost too much courtesy when he suggests, in connection with another open question, that 'it is uncharitable to question Mattheson's veracity'. Otherwise he knows his authorities widely and well. All the biographical part of this volume is agreeably done in a style which of itself has something of Handel's forcefulness. The section dealing with the music renders useful service in regard to Handel's setting of his adopted language. There have been those, notably Purcell enthusiasts, who have severely criticized Handel for what they consider to be his insensitive scansion of English. Dr Young is very fair about this; by music quotations he is able to show Handel breaking bar-lines as strongly as Gibbons (or Purcell,

for that matter) in favour of fluent scansion. He might have gone farther, carrying the contention into the works of Purcell where examples abound (rarely though hardly more so than in Handel) of ill-adjusted scansion as unsound and surely as unprepossessing as any fault of the sort perpetrated by Handel. Inevitably there are banalities; Handel always seems to have worked against time or illness or creditors. The author quotes an example of that from *Deborah*, and on the face of it he makes his case: those priests of Baal do indeed sound banal. Or did Handel perhaps mean them to do so? And, anyhow, to say that 'the palm for heathen exaltation must temporarily rest with Mendelssohn' is to forget William Walton.

SCOTT GODDARD

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Verdi. Ferruccio Bonavia. Dennis Dobson Ltd. 8s. 6d. net.

It is the custom to speak loosely of Verdi 'changing his style' late in middle life; throwing overboard the conventional operatic ballast, the Verdi-gurdy style, as it has been called, and, with *Otello* and *Falstaff* (some think even with *Aïda*), starting to speak in an entirely different language. The truth is that *Aïda* and even *Otello* and *Falstaff* were perfectly logical developments from the earlier operas. Verdi did not 'change' his style: he transcendently enriched, developed, and expanded it. But he kept his identity to the last. The composer of Ulrica's invocation in *Un Ballo* is the composer of Amneris's exhortation in the fourth act of *Aïda*, the composer of 'Di quella pira' in *Il Trovatore* is the composer of 'Ora e per sempre addio' in *Otello*; and Fra Melitone's sermon in *La Forza del Destino* definitely and unmistakably foreshadows Falstaff's 'L'Onore'.

Mr Bonavia makes this clear in his excellent critical biography first published in 1930 and now reprinted. He speaks of *Aïda* as a 'bridge' opera, combining the elements of the early and late periods. 'It may take us a step farther in the direction of *Otello* and *Falstaff*,' he says, 'but the direction is that in which Mac-

beth, *Rigoletto*, and *Traviata* were already pointing – the direction where lay suppler expression and more flexible forms.' In other words, the child was father of the man. In his preface, Mr Bonavia speaks of the collection of letters, *I Copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi*, which appeared after the biography of Bragagnolo and Bettazzi and which cast new light on Verdi's character. 'The letters reveal,' he says, 'the moral greatness of a man who was scrupulous in the observance of his duty, whose honesty was not bounded by conditions and circumstances, whose benefactions were known only to their recipients. Had Verdi not been a composer, he might have forfeited his claims to remembrance, but he would still have been a great man.'

The book is written with scholarship and authority, but far more important than these qualities is the sincere and warm-hearted enthusiasm that glows through it. Mr Bonavia loves his Verdi, and his love has driven at least one reader back to the piano to try to rekindle the fire of the greatest of all Italian composers. And that is the highest tribute I can pay to any book on music: that it sends one back to a renewed enjoyment of the music itself.

STEPHEN WILLIAMS

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Stravinsky: A Critical Survey. Eric Walter White. John Lehmann. 15s. net.

The claim that Mr White's book is 'a critical survey' strikes one as unfair to the reader and cruel to the author. The real value of his pages lies in their factual strength. We are given a clear, concise, and thorough account of Stravinsky's career from 'The Apprentice Years' to his latter-day activities in the U.S.A. Nothing can dispel one's gratitude for so firm and refreshing an emphasis upon plain facts. Yet the composer emerges less as a personality than as a subject for report by an able investigator. This impression arises partly from a treatment pushed to the limits of objectivity, but even more from the committee-room flavour of Mr White's prose. No one would wish to fault

the author for an absence of ornate or highly-coloured writing foreign to his task. But it is surprising to find so little feeling for grace, let alone beauty, in the style of one who has proved himself a poet, and who must be accounted among the most gifted and brilliant conversationalists of his generation.

The major works of Stravinsky are fully described, often with close analysis of detail and structure, and always from the standpoint of real musicianship. Nothing could be more lucid than Mr White's review of such compositions as *Oedipus Rex*, *The Symphony of Psalms*, and *Persephone*. It is wholly to the good that he gives so large a share of his space to music later than *The Rite of Spring*, and thus provides a wealth of information where it is most urgently needed. But he finds room, too, for an admirable outline of *Petrushka*, rounded off with perceptive comment, and a shrewd estimate of its technical points. Here, indeed, we obtain a glimpse of an expressive style to which Mr White seldom allows play elsewhere, and a genuinely critical sense whose consistent employment would have added greatly to the importance of his book.

The crucial weakness of this volume is Mr White's reluctance to commit himself to a critical study. It is not that he declines to offer any criticism of Stravinsky: his observations on *The Fairy's Kiss*, for instance, are unsparing to the point of censure. But again and again he contents himself with description in the place of reasoned valuation. Mr White suggests that *The Symphony of Psalms* and *Persephone* (among other works) may well represent the high-water mark of Stravinsky's invention. The point would have been worth frank discussion. Many musicians are willing to allow that *The Symphony of Psalms* is a 'strong' work, while considering that *Persephone* is a resounding error of judgment. Their minds are not closed to new opinion. Mr White gives no sign that he regards either work as a basis for criticism. He seems to be inhibited by the notion that, because the final verdict must rest with posterity, it is futile for the present-day writer to attempt an estimate. This is a poison-

ous fallacy which, if accepted, would open the door to complete indolence in regard to the music of our time. There is no reason why we should be daunted because nineteenth-century critics were sometimes wrong. It would require consummate vanity for any of us to decline the risk of ever making a mistake, or to imagine that posterity must bow to our verdict. The future can look after itself. What we are entitled to do, here and now, is to judge contemporary music to the best of our abilities, and to dismiss as specious any pleading which seeks to turn us from this duty.

Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales. Alain Daniélou.
The India Society. Price unmarked.

Daniélou's *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales* is a book of first-rate erudition disfigured by rancour. It demands from the reader a far-reaching knowledge of acoustics, and even those who are tolerably expert will find that they have taken on a tough proposition. The author is beyond reproach, and above all praise, in everything that he has to state about the technical aspects of his task. The finest chapters are those which expound the basis of Hindu and Chinese music. Each is a brilliant exposition, invaluable to the Western reader, and successful in clearing away numerous causes of bewilderment. These chapters, too, are among the least controversial. Let me say at once, then, that this volume deserves study by every thoughtful musician, and will reward the layman gifted with a mathematical sense.

The basic thesis that the human ear requires intensive training to appreciate the finer subdivisions of the semitone, and that European listeners lose much from their limitation in this respect, is one to be noted with humility. The European may find some difficulty in following the Eastern metaphysics on which Mr Daniélou lays considerable stress, but here again he will admit the wisdom of respecting matters which may be be-

yond his present experience to judge. The author commands immediate sympathy in underlining the value of keener sensitivity to purity of sound, and alertness to melody freed from the thrall of harmony. This need not imply the reader's assent to Rousseau's dictum (quoted with relish!) that all our harmony is a barbarous and gothic invention. And there seems ground for a courteous demur to Mr Daniélou's insistence that all psychological explanation of musical experience must be discarded.

It is understandable that so eminent an authority as this author should be allergic to the efforts of European scholars in the field of Oriental music. Yet I doubt whether these scholars have often, if ever, found themselves quite so openly loathed. Mr Daniélou barely concedes them any acquaintance with the elements of acoustic reality, but that is a caress compared with what follows. These unfortunate gentlemen are held to have reached the pinnacle of their iniquities during their studies of Greek music. In particular, they are accused of denying that the immediate sources of this music were undoubtedly the Near East. I must confess that this unlikely caper on the part of scholars had escaped my attention, though I am relieved to find that Mr Daniélou gives a little credit to Egypt as well. It transpires, however, that 'almost all the theories of Western scholars concerning the relations of Eastern and Western civilizations of ancient times are absolutely untrustworthy. And, in certain fields, admitted theories which are believed by most Westerners to be irrefutable truths amount to nothing less than a deliberate falsification of history.'

The above quotation makes clear that Mr Daniélou is quite willing to bring serious accusation against European scholars while remaining inexcusably vague about the facts of their offence. I am sorry to say that there is a good deal – far too much – of this kind of thing in his book. It requires a supreme effort of self-control by the reader to pass over these puerile vilifications for the sake of really valuable material in which the volume abounds. This unconcealed dislike of Western scholar-

ship and musical practice militates, indeed, against one of the chief purposes in writing the book at all – namely, a deep and passionate desire that Oriental music shall be more widely understood. It is unfortunate, too, that even the few pages grudgingly allotted to Western music are occupied with disparagement rather than exposition. Most of us will be prepared for an onslaught upon the unsatisfactory compromise of equal temperament, and Mr Daniélou makes the most of this opportunity. But he finds it impossible to refrain from adding that: ‘Westerners have lost all sense of a music able to express clearly the highest ideas and feelings.’ This bidding to deny our heritage, and turn elsewhere for enlightenment, is one which we might hesitate to accept even from our friends. It is not in that guise that Mr Daniélou comes before us as counsellor.

Prelude. C. H. Abrahall. O.U.P. 8s. 6d. net.

Prelude is ‘an imaginative account of the early life of Eileen Joyce’. It is a sweetly pretty tale, full of fun and laughter, not to mention a spice of excitement – I particularly recommend Chapter IV, which is entitled ‘A Nasty Experience’. It will not surprise me to hear that this book has surpassed even the popularity of *The Young Visitors*. I feel sure, too, that *Prelude* will delight many who have mourned the untimely death of Angela Brazil. Its thrilling chapters of school life, though scarcely equal to *The Jolliest Term on Record*, are quite worthy of the Brazilian tradition. Those of us who have been consoling ourselves with *The Impossible Prefect* and *Catherine, Head of the House* – two of the best non-Brazilian novels – have every reason to be grateful to Mrs Abrahall. It may be that *Prelude* will set a fashion in imaginative tales about the early life of singers, pianists, conductors, and *je ne sais quoi*. If so, I look forward to a bedtime yarn by Nurse Dugdale.

ROBIN HULL

NEW MUSIC

ROBIN HULL



THE curtain rises on the Sunday parlour of a trim villa at Allhallows-on-Sea. Mr Allhallows, refreshed by a cut from the horse, is taking his ease before the empty grate with an unfilled pipe in his mouth. His sons, Len (21), Ron (19), and Stan (17), are grouped listlessly about the feet of their sire. Full well they know there is nothing doing on the banks of the Estuary in mid-winter. Mrs Allhallows, from sheer force of habit, is smiling mysteriously as she knits tiny garments. Dad stretches out his hand to the utility bookcase, bringing the thing down with a crash, but manages to salvage the apple of his eye. This is the dear old book about British music from which he reads aloud to the family every Sunday afternoon before the boys can make their getaway. Adjusting an auxiliary pair of pince-nez over his spectacles, and screwing in a couple of rimless monocles *behind* the specs, he is all set to resume the tale of the harum-scarum 1920's when Bax, Bliss, and Berners were ever up to some dodge of a rich nature. Len alone seems a little restless as Dad drones away at the oft-told story. If only the old man would get on to 1948! But he never does. It is always the glories of British music after the *first* world war that Mr Allhallows expounds to his gigantic young olive-branches. The richness and fertility of British music in 1948 is something he has yet to realize. The idea that history is being made beneath his very pince-nez, and that Walton's String Quartet in A minor (O.U.P., 5s.) is part of this history, would astonish Mr Allhallows as much as the discovery of a lump of coal in the scuttle.

The score of Walton's Quartet confirms an earlier impression that its greatest strength lies in the first movement (*Allegro*)

and the third (*Lento*). Alike as regards originality and resource, matched by intense depth of feeling, the *Allegro* is one of the most remarkable movements in the chamber music of recent times. The close-knit invention is expressed with a clarity which, throughout the work as a whole, distinguishes Walton's superb command of his medium. This opening movement will strike the listener as outstanding, too, for a new spaciousness of structure in which every detail makes unerring point. Above all, the music belongs to a field of experience genuinely different from that in which the Symphony and Violin Concerto took root. That point demands emphasis in view of the fact that its establishment has been awaited with some anxiety.

The *Lento* brings a reminder that Walton is consistently at his finest in slow movements. Here one finds a combination of power and reflection whose effect is supremely beautiful as well as technically impressive. The *Presto* (second movement) has a sinewy brilliance which acts as a light but well-chosen foil to the preceding *Allegro*. I must confess to a sense of disappointment with the Finale (*Allegro molto*), which seems fidgety rather than forward-moving, and too reminiscent of what Walton has expressed more cogently elsewhere. In general, however, there is no reason whatever to dissent from the verdict which places this Quartet very high among the composer's works. I am sorry that the publishers decided to issue the score as a facsimile reproduction of the composer's manuscript. It is an irritation to the reader even when (as in this case) the manuscript is exceedingly clear. If it has become a matter of policy to publish scores in this form, I hope the practice will be abandoned at the earliest opportunity.

It is a major mystery why the music of Edmund Rubbra, whose distinction no thoughtful listener would attempt to dispute, has still to obtain a bare sufficiency of performances. The relative neglect of his symphonies, for instance, is simply unaccountable. Their potent individuality is acknowledged far and wide; the Third and Fourth, in particular, are proved suc-

cesses in the concert-hall; and their cumulative effect has shown that Rubbra possesses all the characteristics of a great symphonist. It is not too much to say that this situation would never have arisen if Sir Henry Wood were still alive. He held an invincible belief in the importance of Rubbra's symphonies, and urged the paramount necessity of their being recorded for gramophone. Meanwhile there is a great deal that musicians themselves can do to see that such works as the String Quartet in F minor, Op. 35 (Lengnick: 3s. + 12½ per cent increase) shall receive their proper share of attention. The material of this Quartet has been considerably revised. It shows the expected mastery of line – Rubbra has always been assured in the organic connection of his ideas – without that thickness of texture into which the composer has sometimes been tempted. This clarifying process is sheer gain to the vitality which impregnates each of the three movements. Perhaps the *Lento* is most striking, alike in boldness and depth of ideas, but the inventive level throughout is exceedingly satisfying.

Richard Arnell belongs to a younger generation than Rubbra – he was born in 1917 – and it is only recently that I have had an adequate chance to hear some of his music. The performance of a symphony under Sir Thomas Beecham went far to suggest that Arnell is a composer of real character. Further acquaintance with his works has done everything to confirm this view. A consistent feature of their pages is keen lucidity of texture, not merely for contrapuntal display, but as a natural and inevitable means of giving true expression to the ideas. Indeed, the whole range of Arnell's technique is remarkably fine even when judged by the very exacting standard that prevails to-day. His output is already prolific. To be sure, one finds marked variations in the interest of what he has to say, and sometimes an insufficient evidence of second thoughts where these are clearly required. But the flow of his invention is nearly always fresh and spontaneous, and his firm sense of design ensures that the music as a whole never lacks a convincing structure.

One of Arnell's most attractive works is his *Canzona and Capriccio* for solo violin and string orchestra (Music Press, Inc., \$3.00). This is fairly easy to play, though it demands alert musicianship, and is excellently conceived for its medium. The *Canzona* brings out the composer's gift for lyrical melody inspired by true imagination. And the buoyant spirit of the *Capriccio* is wholly captivating. The earlier *Sonata* for Chamber Orchestra (Music Press, Inc., \$3.00) is admirably written, but less consistent in the quality of ideas. However, the musical interest grows with their discussion – Arnell is usually cogent in argument of his themes – and the total effect strikes one as rewarding. This *Sonata* is likely to be found readily acceptable by the players themselves; the instrumentation is thoroughly apt and well-balanced; and conductors of chamber orchestras may be expected to agree that the work makes a welcome addition to their repertoire.

The merits of Thomas B. Pitfield as a composer seem to be fully recognized in the north of England, but still to await the more general acceptance they deserve. It is to be hoped that the publication of his sensitive and beautiful *Night Music* (Augener, 3s. 6d.) may help to remedy this situation. *Night Music* is an unaccompanied choral suite whose five numbers demand, at the most, a division of the voices into six parts. The exquisite setting entitled *Sleep* may be cited as typical of the delicacy so characteristic of Mr Pitfield's treatment. He shows unfailing perception in providing music appropriate to the words of which he himself is author. His technique in writing for voices has, of course, the exemplary command to be expected from one long experienced in every detail of this task. I hope very much that *Night Music* will be carefully studied by all who appreciate choral settings of superfine quality.

GRAMOPHONE COMMENTARY

RALPH HILL



THIS quarter's recordings feature four famous violinists: Heifetz, Neveu, Haendel, and Szigeti. And in that order I judge their value as violinists. Note, please, that I said as violinists and not as interpretative artists. For example, Szigeti is a very admirable and sensitive artist, but, in my opinion, his technical ability as a violinist is weak. Whenever he has a really difficult virtuoso passage to play he always suggests a feeling of great effort. This is only too apparent in Szigeti's performance of Brahms's Violin Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Ormandy (Col.). This great, big work demands great, big playing, and Szigeti possesses neither the technique nor the fullness of tone to bring it off successfully, despite the many tricks available in the recording box to create the illusion of a full tone. Szigeti excels in intimate lyrical music, and therefore his playing is much more acceptable in Beethoven's early Violin Sonata in D, Op. 12, No. 1 (Col.), in which he is excellently partnered by the Polish pianist Horszowski. But it is poor stuff for Beethoven!

I don't think there can be any doubt about the fact that Jascha Heifetz is the greatest violinist of our time, now that Kreisler seems to have left the concert platform. Heifetz belongs to the royal line, the line of Ysaye, Sarasate, and the rest of the great masters of the violin who flourished half a century ago. Heifetz has everything: a phenomenal left-hand, a powerful and perfectly controlled bow-arm, and a rich, warm, and responsive tone which is unmistakable for its very personal

character and quality. Listen to the exquisite finish and masterly control of his playing of an arrangement of Debussy's valse *La plus que lente* (H.M.V.). But what a poor recording – the surface noise is positively serpentine!

Ginette Neveu is another truly great violinist, whose emotional intensity never makes her playing untidy for the simple reason that she commands such a fine technical equipment. Her performance of Ravel's *Pièce en Forme de Habanera* (H.M.V.) is full of grace and distinction. Ida Haendel has always been a problem to me. She has both a wonderful tone and technique which certainly belong to the royal line, but she lacks that something (is it emotional maturity?) which places the playing of Heifetz and Neveu on a much higher plane. In all due respect to Miss Haendel, I feel that both her mental and emotional planes from a musical point of view are ideally adjusted to a purely violinistic work like Wieniawski's *Polonaise Brillante* (Decca), which she plays with faultless brilliance.

While on the subject of solo violin playing I should like to mention David Wise's very clear and sensitive performance of Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent (Col.).

Adolf Busch is another famous violinist. I place him fifth on my present list of famous soloists. Although he aims at the purist ideal of self-effacement and at playing the music as it was originally written down by the composer, I wish he would think a little more about violin playing for its own sake. There might be less harshness of tone and rough edges of intonation in his anxiety to impart to us the spiritual and intellectual secrets of the composer. I find Mr Busch's playing more to my liking when it is blended with that of the three other members of the Busch String Quartet. However, Mr Busch is not exactly self-effacing when it comes to quartet playing, as may be heard in the performance by the Busch String Quartet of Brahms's Quartet in A minor (Col.). Not only does Mr Busch dominate the ensemble by sheer weight of his bow-arm, but also by sheer

force of personality, and one feels that the other three members of his Quartet have accepted his decrees on the interpretation of Brahms without question.

Mr Busch's approach to Brahms is unsullied by any romantic feelings. The A minor Quartet, for example, is treated with an intellectual purity, as if it were a part of Bach's *Art of Fugue*. As excellent as this recording is from every point of view, I think I prefer the more romantic approach to Brahms of the *Trio di Trieste* in the Piano Trio in C minor (H.M.V.). However, I don't agree with their *tempi* in the two middle movements: why take the *andante grazioso* too slow and the *presto non assai* too fast?

The fiftieth anniversary of Brahms's death has been a good excuse to issue several new recordings of Brahms's major works, among which I give first place to the magnificent recordings of the Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor dramatically and dynamically played by Clifford Curzon with the National Symphony Orchestra under Jorda (Decca), and the Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat played with superb control and finesse by Solomon with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Debrowen (H.M.V.).

Three other piano concertos must be mentioned – Rachmaninov's No. 2 in C minor (Col.), Chopin's No. 2 in F minor (Col.), and César Franck's Symphonic Variations (Decca), which is virtually a concerto. A new and first-class Rachmaninov has been long overdue, but I don't call this a first-class recording. Cyril Smith plays brilliantly, though rather mechanically, and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Sargent give a good account of the orchestral part, but the actual recording is muzzy and buzzy. Malcuzyński devotes his beautiful touch and lyrical gifts to Chopin's youthful and uneven Concerto, while the Philharmonia Orchestra under Paul Kletzki do their best with its empty and very uninteresting accompaniment. Eileen Joyce scores a success with her playing of the solo part in Franck's Variations. Judging by the way the whole

work is interpreted as a perfectly balanced entity, the master-mind behind this performance is Charles Münch, who also secures some beautiful playing from the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra.

Three rather out-of-the-way concertos add a piquant seasoning to the quarter's issues. I give pride of place to Mozart's exquisite Harp and Flute Concerto in C, which is given a very beautiful and polished performance by Lili Laskine, René le Roy, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Beecham (H.M.V.). But in all due respect to Miss Laskine and Mr le Roy, excellent players as both of them are, it seems to me a very wrong-headed policy to engage these foreign artists for an English recording when we have artists of our own who are equal if not superior. I refer especially to Sidonie Goossens and Arthur Gleghorn, who are as well known to British music-lovers if not better than the two French artists. Certainly Sidonie Goossens is. The second Concerto is for oboe and string orchestra and is by Marcello, the early eighteenth-century Venetian composer. This delightful little work is played with superb artistry by Leon Goossens with the Philharmonic String Orchestra (Col.). The third Concerto is Strauss's Horn Concerto No. 1 in E flat, played by Dennis Brain with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Alceo Galliera (Col.). This early work of Strauss is utter tosh, and would never have been revived except for that miraculous young horn player Dennis Brain, who plays the solo part in a masterly fashion.

There are two fine recordings of Berlioz's *Fantastic Symphony*, which differ from each other only in a few small details of interpretation. One recording is by the Hallé Orchestra under Barbirolli (H.M.V.); the other by the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam under Van Beinum (Decca). That admirable conductor Alceo Galliera conducts the Philharmonia Orchestra in a live and vital performance of Dvořák's *New World Symphony* (Col.), while his older compatriot de Sabata conducts the Symphony Orchestra of the Augusteo, Rome, in a beautifully balanced and sonorous performance of Beethoven's

Pastoral Symphony (H.M.V.). Tchaikovsky's *Pathetic Symphony* receives a very clearly articulated and impressive performance by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Malko (H.M.V.), but the recording of some of the climaxes is not good.

Among chamber-music recordings there are two prizewinners in the Paganini String Quartet's brilliant and perfectly balanced performance of Beethoven's Quartet in C minor, Op. 18, No. 4 (H.M.V.), and in the Griller String Quartet's performance of Mozart's Quartet in C, K.387 (Decca), which is the first of the set of six quartets that Mozart dedicated to Haydn. This is lovely Mozart playing, and shows that the Grillers may be considered as perhaps the finest quartet ensemble of their generation. Fournier and Schnabel also produce a well-balanced partnership in their performance of Beethoven's ever-green A major Sonata for cello and piano (H.M.V.).

Music for piano solo is fairly well represented. Denis Matthews has made a beautiful recording of Haydn's 49th Sonata in E flat (Col.), which would have been more usefully labelled 'Piano Sonata No. 3 in E flat.' The expressive slow movement might well be a forerunner of Chopin's nocturnes. Iris Lovelidge plays convincingly Palmgren's *Evening Whispers* and *The Swan* (Col.) – salon music of the best kind à la Grieg, but without that master's harmonic range and variety. I used to think that Edwin Fischer was a great pianist. He may be technically, but I challenge his taste in his 'interpretation' of Brahms's *Ballade* and *Rhapsody*, both in G minor (H.M.V.). He introduces some strange *rallentandos* which distort the rhythmic flow of the music, and he clips some of the melodic phrases in an offensive manner. Dinu Lipati plays with beautiful tone and deep feeling Chopin's Nocturne in D flat, Op. 27, No. 2 (Col.). Arthur Rubinstein reproduces all the romantic feeling and richness of tone-colour to be found in Schumann's *Arabesque* (H.M.V.), and Kathleen Long gives us a very clear and richly-toned performance of Schubert's Sonata in E flat major, Op. 122 (Decca).

MUSIC OF THE FILM

SCOTT GODDARD



To take the latest first while it is still quick with life in one's mind. And as one writes there comes the feeling that Cocteau's *La Belle et la bête* will never cease to quicken the more private exaltations of memory, and that therefore there is the less need for haste in setting down impressions. Nor for that matter is Auric's music of any noticeable force. Better than that, it is discreet and subtle in the uses to which it is put by the producer. Auric can provide an almost Wagnerian abundance, as we know from *La Symphonie pastorale*. Either persuasion or the pruning knife has been used in his music for *La Belle et la bête*, and the unbridled fantasy of Cocteau's vision is never, as it might so devastatingly have been, curbed by too close association with music or swamped in mere fanfares of sound. Where music is not wanted it is not used, and thus tells the more for the silences that break in upon it. In quality Auric's backgrounds have none of the originality that makes Cocteau's work so immensely stimulating. There the music fails where in the hands of a more adventurous composer it might have succeeded in supporting and if necessary intensifying the screen image and the motion of the tale, which is played in a peculiarly musical atmosphere of disembodied enchantment. But although it never aids the screen it has the sovereign virtue of discretion and for that we may be thankful, shattered as we are with the general indiscretion almost everywhere else.

The Italian film at the Curzon, *Vivere in pace*, had music of a decent unobtrusive quality which at moments rose almost but not quite as high as the remarkable acting. It is the first time I have heard (or noticed) the effective use of quotation in a film

score. The tale, it will be remembered, deals with certain happenings during the second World War in a secluded mountain village in Italy. These events are in turn amusing, menacing, tragic, and always vitally true to experience. This is not the place to speak in more than the most general terms of the excellence of the directing, the natural artistry of the acting, or the beauty of the photography, all of which are notable and make this film an unusual and astonishing delight. It was a situation for music to make or to ruin. Luckily there was little either mawkish for the love element or raucous for the jollity; and there were silences also. Menace entered in the appearance first of the Fascist boss on his visits of inspection and then in that of the German N.C.O. on a similar bent. The way in which the two men and what they stood for were linked through a quotation from *Tristan* was admirably done, the screen showing the Fascist demanding yet another vat of wine from the villager, while the love-potion theme from the Wagner opera stole on the ear. This brought into sudden relief the underlying theme of the picture, the Nazi dominating the Fascist; the German jackboot keeping the Italian bully up to scratch; the Teutonic myth fuddling a weak Latin mind. The quotation was gone in a flash but it told fully and instantly.

That was an opportunity well taken. Margaret Lockwood's by now famous line in *The White Unicorn* was another that was not taken at all, as far as I could hear. The richer of the two heroines lies in bed with new-born babe at side. Husband stands at foot of bed and they bicker, the question being, shall the mother nurse the child or the nurse mother it. Mother becomes all possessive. Turning to the infant she produces the great line: 'It's the first thing I've had to do entirely on my own.' Now then, music; and how! What a chance for a *leitmotif* to emphasize the self-sufficiency of this remarkable woman. Her subsequent actions, though less magical, give opportunity enough for the return of the theme. But the music purls along and the opportunity is missed.

The magical element in the Lefanu film *Uncle Silas* is already so thoroughly dealt with on the screen that practically nothing is left for Alan Rawsthorne's music to contribute. This may well be one reason for the feeling with which one is left finally, that there has been unexpected reliance on repetition. In the admittedly short period during which I have listened to film music with deliberate intentness, I cannot remember having come on an example of this kind where music which is in itself of the finest quality lets through, as it were, the chill air of the studio where the voice of the director is heard saying: 'I think we shall want a couple more bars there.'

It is a point that will probably escape the notice of the average film-goer, who, if he or she apprehends the music at all (and it must be admitted that the screen takes practically all available attention), will consider it adequate as a background. In reality it is much more than that. Rawsthorne is too intelligent to be content with a mere background. His ear is keen and selective, too much so for it ever to be possible, one would imagine, to produce washes of sound. He has, in fact, an acute sense of values and is the type of expert in craftsmanship plus visionary in music that the film industry needs; the ideal partner for an alert-minded director.

In *Uncle Silas* the weird and the fantastic, the growing sense of horror in us who watch, or of terror in the child who is forced to submit to, her uncle's machinations, the cumulative state of tension – all these elements are present almost physically on the screen. The suggestion of evil is continual and strong. Suggestion is one of music's peculiar attributes. Cocteau uses it thus in *La Belle et la bête* with Auric's music, which has less evocative power than Rawsthorne's. Comparing the music of these two films in retrospect it seems regrettable that the music in *Uncle Silas* was not allowed to play a larger part in suggesting suspense and all the other overtones of emotion in the tale.

MUSIC OVER THE AIR

STANLEY BAYLISS



TWENTY-FIVE years of the B.B.C. ! Amazing !

This amazement takes two forms. One feels either that broadcasting has been going on for a shorter time than that or for much longer. Those who are 40 and over, for instance, will feel surprised that a quarter of a century has passed since first they tinkered with a crystal set. On the other hand, to the younger generation the household wireless has been there ever since they can remember, and they are probably surprised to learn that broadcasting is really so young.

One of the great changes wrought by broadcasting is this. Before it began, to make acquaintance with even the standard masterpieces was a laborious business. One had to indulge in piano-duet versions of symphonies or become a mental score-reader. With the advent of daily broadcasting, one could quickly get to know the general repertory by hearing actual performances. Yet, although that has been invaluable, I find, as I look back, that I think chiefly of performances of unusual works that were perhaps beyond the resources of our ordinary concert-giving institutions: Curiously enough, the three compositions that come readiest to my mind represent schools of musical thought with which I am not completely in sympathy: Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder*; Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*; and Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*. The last two, of course, were concert performances of operas; but we had no institution capable of giving us stage productions of them. Also, let us not forget that the B.B.C. 'saved' the Proms.

One of the most satisfactory feature programmes has been the series devoted to Gilbert and Sullivan. Unlike his counter-

parts in Hollywood, Leslie Baily, the author of the script, consulted original documents and presented something close to the facts. This was no *Song to Remember* or *Song of Love*, both of which were only remotely true. Baily's method, however, could not be applied to lives of greater composers. While a satisfactory dramatic narrative could, no doubt, be concocted, the examples of their works introduced into the scheme could only be excerpts from lengthy compositions, and this would be maddening to any serious music-lover. With a light-opera composer, this difficulty does not arise. His works lend themselves to extraction, and a song, duet, or chorus can be taken out of its context and performed complete, without artistic violence.

This series was discussed in the Sunday morning feature called *The Critics*. These discussions call upon every type of critic except one: the music critic. But the point raised about Gilbert and Sullivan is one that crops up in all the arts. This particular speaker said he had enjoyed the Gilbert and Sullivan programmes and was surprised that he had done so, for when he was an undergraduate at Cambridge he had been utterly contemptuous of these operas. Yet before that, as a young boy, he had enjoyed them very much. Trying to account for these changes, he argued that familiarity had dulled his appreciation, and that as the growth of positive dislike had coincided with a period in which Gilbert and Sullivan were a cult in the university, his distaste was intensified by his determination not to be a participation in this cult. The years passed by, he had heard or seen no Gilbert and Sullivan performances, had listened to this series with a fresh mind, and found them unexpectedly brilliant.

That is a very plausible explanation of a change of mind, but how, asked another speaker, account for the fact that quite a lot of people continue to enjoy what they liked in their childhood throughout their lives? To them there never comes a revulsion of taste.

I dwell upon this because it is applicable to far greater composers than Sullivan. Wagner, for instance. Previous to the war,

there was an increasing tendency to write Wagner down, and thanks to that, but naturally far more because of the War and a mistaken idea that Wagner was a complete Nazi, we have had no performances of Wagner's operas for a long while apart from Sir Thomas Beecham's broadcasts of *Tristan* and *The Valkyrie* and the Carl Rosa production of *The Flying Dutchman*; is it not extremely probable that when actual first-class stage presentations of Wagner are heard and seen again, those who have written him down will experience something akin to what this listener to the Gilbert and Sullivan series admitted he had found? And like the other speaker, there have been numberless others who enjoyed and continued to enjoy Wagner from their very first acquaintance with his works.

Broadcast opera continues to be interesting. Although *Louise* is musically no very great snake, I found it surprisingly satisfactory over the air, except for the street scene. Any listener who had never seen a stage performance would probably find it extremely difficult to piece this together in his mind. To him it must seem almost a series of totally unrelated ejaculations which might be fitted plausibly together when accompanied by stage picture and action.

Unhappily, I was able to hear only the last half-hour or so of the *Beggar's Opera* broadcast. What I did hear I thought very successful. Each character was portrayed by two people, one to speak the dialogue, the other to sing the songs and duets. I came to this broadcast with two experiences that might have made the performance seem very poor. I had just seen *Rigoletto* very well sung in Italian at the Cambridge Theatre, and I had memories of several Hammersmith performances with Frederick Ranalow as a superb Macheath. Yet I thoroughly enjoyed this broadcast. The English words were strong and sinewy after the soft and open sounds of Italian, and the singing stood up well to comparisons with the old Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, days. *Louise* was conducted by Stanford Robinson, *The Beggar's Opera* by Walter Goehr. There is irony in this, because

since he took over the conductorship of the B.B.C. Theatre Orchestra, Goehr has been accused of neglecting English music. Nothing could be more English than the tunes of *The Beggar's Opera*, and Frederick Austin's arrangements sound as masterly and original as ever.

It would be interesting to know how many listeners think that the B.B.C. is often too wholesale. Obviously they had to have special concerts to mark Vaughan Williams's seventy-fifth birthday and they would have been foolish to ignore the series of public Strauss concerts during that composer's recent visit to this country. But, in each case, was it wise to make the composer also *This Week's Composer*? There is such a thing as musical indigestion, and one hopes that as a result the works of Strauss and Vaughan Williams will not be laid aside for a long period. They are both composers whose works we want to hear regularly and not in one large dose. Here, perhaps, I am going against the main stream of the musical world. Never has there been such a time for one-man concerts and series of concerts devoted to the works of one composer.

The B.B.C. has also begun to give us all Mahler's symphonies. Mahler, at any rate, has never managed to enter the regular English repertory, and there is therefore more need for a large dose of him than there is for one of Vaughan Williams or Strauss.

His First Symphony was given by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter. Mahler could have no better advocate, for Walter was a protégé, colleague, and friend of his. Even in this First Symphony, Mahler is a curious duality. Listening to it, I could not help thinking that if the two middle movements had been published as separate orchestral pieces, we should have all approved of them. But the grandiose finale is entirely out of keeping. Presumably it is this last movement that has given the symphony the nickname of 'Titan'. It is, however, quite certainly the non-titanic parts, the simple and plain passages that set one thinking of Schubert or Dvořák or

Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony, that win one over to this work. A good case could be made that Mahler would have been a more greatly appreciated composer if he had not set his thoughts in symphonic form. When he is limited by words, as in his songs, the finale of the Fourth Symphony, and the *Song of the Earth*, the ring of his coining is very genuine.

OPERA IN LONDON

STEPHEN WILLIAMS



LET us first consider Dennis Arundell's new production of *Faust* at Sadler's Wells, which was one of the major sensations of the season. Some critics raved about it, others raved at it; but it was generally admitted that *Faust*, like certain other Old Masters, would be no worse for a little cleaning up.

The opera itself is still a fairly meaty bone of contention. Presumably only a Beethoven or a Wagner at the least could have done full justice to Goethe's cosmic drama of the human soul; and admirers of that formidable sage have never forgiven Gounod and his librettists for making a thoroughly effective romantic opera of it. Moreover, *Faust* persists in being the most popular opera in the world, and popularity has usually to be paid for in prestige: on the theory that the many-headed monster needs must love the lowest when it sees (or hears) it, we are too apt to assume that anything it *does* love is necessarily rubbish – an assumption easily disproved by the fact that Shakespeare is still the most popular English dramatist. Let us, therefore, forget Goethe and salute Gounod's opera for the splendid piece of work it is. And let those who wish it had been Beethoven or Wagner be grateful that *Faust* at least fell into the hands of a composer of some melodic and dramatic power. Suppose it had been Saint-Saëns!

Dennis Arundell did not forget Goethe: his production, a bold break with tradition, did much to restore the atmosphere of mediæval mystery and to present the drama, not as a mere village seduction, but as an eternal conflict between good and evil, light and darkness. Incidentally, the darkness usually won: nearly all the episodes seemed to begin in the middle of the

night, including the Tavern Scene (we assume there were no licensing laws in mediæval Germany!). Nevertheless, the dimming created illusion and made for quick changes of scene, and altogether the old war-horse galloped along with fresh energy in his new caparison. But caparisons can be odious, as Mrs Malaprop implied; and there were one or two things I found hard to forgive. For instance, the Introduction, which – until the advent of Valentine's silly song – contains the noblest and most Faust-like music of the whole score, was cut, without explanation or apology. So was the spinning-wheel (although its whirr remained in the orchestra), with the result that Marguerite (Marion Lowe) had to sing the ballad of the King in Thule strolling about the stage and fiddling with what looked like a spindle of cotton. In my edition of Goethe she sings it while undressing, but evidently Sadler's Wells shrank from being as realistic as that. Then Faust (James Johnston) wore a costume that made him look like a rather neglected brother of Turiddu; and when Marguerite said that one of such knightly bearing must be of noble birth (or words to that effect), I could not help murmuring: 'Yes, Goethe was quite right: you really *are* an innocent!' Let us be adventurous, by all means, but there is no sense in scrapping tradition when tradition cannot be bettered.

There were angry protests when the Vienna State Opera Company brought its own orchestra to Covent Garden instead of employing British players; which seemed to me equivalent to inviting Yehudi Menuhin to play a concerto but insisting on his using a violin from the shop round the corner. As always when such pettifogging national prejudices attempt to interfere with an international art, the protesters, with unerring accuracy, hit the wrong nail on the head: for the Vienna Orchestra brilliantly and triumphantly proved that it was as indispensable to the company as lungs are to a singer. As a matter of fact, if the protest had been against the singers there might have been something in it; and at this part of the outfit

I own to being a little crestfallen. The singers showed efficiency and sound teamwork, but I felt that with rigorous rehearsals an English company could have done quite as well.

Of the operas I saw, *Fidelio* remains most vividly in my memory. We know, of course, that after the production of Paer's *Leonora* Beethoven said to the composer: 'I like your opera; I think I'll set it to music'; and we know how magnificently he did. But he did not set it to theatre, and I think most of us will admit, if we are honest, that we go to a performance of *Fidelio* rather in the spirit of the man who forces himself to go to church on Sunday evening instead of going to the pub. It has become a commonplace, in fact, that *Fidelio*, unlike children, should be heard and not seen. But the Vienna production was an agreeable surprise: the thing really came to life, and I for one found myself genuinely excited and moved – more, I must add, by the acting than by the singing. The entrance of the prisoners, for instance, shading their eyes before the sudden miracle of sunlight, was a masterstroke of imaginative staging. I thought the most satisfying performance was that of Ludwig Weber as Rocco the jailer, a rough, homespun personality with a touch of Hans Sachs about him. Paul Schoeffler's Pizarro had on the whole more character than his Don Giovanni – not the conventional stage villain, but a man driven to evil 'like a ship in a black storm', and corrupted by the poison in his own heart. His singing was resourceful and accomplished, and though his voice sometimes lacked the iron ring, everything he did with it was unquestionable. Hilda Konetzni was a noble Leonora, but she had awkward moments now and then with her top notes.

For a really vivid and spirited *Don Giovanni* we had to go to the Cambridge Theatre where Bruce Boyce, the M.A.D. Society's latest 'discovery', was singing his first leading part with the company. About his interpretation there was some rather curious disagreement: some of my colleagues maintained that he was not 'seductive', and maintained it so strenuously that I was almost fain to compliment them on having a more

rewarding experience than myself of Don Giovanni's favourite pastime. I disagreed; to me the man showed immense charm (he is well over six feet in height and with a dominating presence) and once, when his arms stole round Zerlina and his voice sank to a serpentine whisper, my flesh trembled – or at least it would have done if I had been a woman. And I recalled the remark of the Cockney girl on first hearing the story of the opera: 'Why, the fellow must have been a regular Don Juan!'

Of the beauty of his voice and the fluent style of his singing, however, there was no disagreement at all; and, while still deploring national prejudices, we can at least feel gratified at having English-speaking singers who can, as it were, hold their heads above Italian waters. We had some splendidly passionate and full-bodied singing from Rachelle Ravina as Anna and Franca Sacchi as Elvira, and a contrast of gentle charm from Daria Bayan's Zerlina. Murray Dickie gave 'Il mio Tesoro' a beautiful and unbroken outline and acted with dignity, although the difference in height between the scapegrace and the avenger was a little unfortunate. Italo Tajo's Leporello was a 'muddy-mettled rascal' straight out of some picaresque novel of Old Spain. But who told him to gabble through his Catalogue Song at such a frantic rate? One completely missed the leer in the voice. The Don's 'Fin ch' han dal Vino' was another farce: a neck-and-neck steeplechase between singer and conductor (Alberto Erede). Honours were easy, but I should have liked to see (or hear) more of the race. After a few more months of practice they will, no doubt, be able to finish the song before it starts.

While English artists were singing in Italian at the Cambridge, Italian artists were singing in English at Covent Garden. I feel there must be a profound moral of some kind here, but at the moment I cannot 'hammer it out'. Paolo Silveri could, however, and at the opening performance of the English season he placed himself at once among the truly great Rigolettos. His voice is a delight – a full baritone, as rich and dark as burgundy –

and there was subtle, imaginative characterization in everything he did. His figure, for example, seemed shrunken to about half its normal size. Elda Ribetti's voice struck me as being too cold for Gilda; she seemed now and then to be relegating Verdi to an earlier century.

Peter Grimes was added to the repertory later, in a very dark production by Tyrone Guthrie and with a new setting by Tanya Moiseiwitsch which made Grimes's hut look like Peggotty's boat left by the tide on the summit of a tall rock. Peter Pears's *Grimes* remains one of the cleverest psychological studies in contemporary opera, although his voice did not lead us all the way up the Covent Garden path.

BALLET IN LONDON

ARNOLD L. HASKELL



SINCE the end of the de Basil season at Covent Garden we have had a welcome break that has given us an opportunity to sum up the current situation in ballet.

The original Ballets Russes had a most successful season from a box-office point of view, but unfortunately left the prestige of the Ballets Russes at the lowest that it has ever been. The critics; those who remember the old ballet, and the new generation, all felt a sense of frustration; it was rather like looking at some fine fresco that was so faded that only the outlines, and the faintest suggestion of colour, remained. It was not that the company was ill-equipped technically, or that the ballets were so badly rehearsed – Grigoriev had done his highly competent best in the short time available – but what it lacked was the Russian flavour, which had vanished almost entirely, and matters of artistic detail so very important in these works, especially in Diaghilev revival, had been sadly neglected. For instance, Bakst's magnificent costumes for *The Good Humoured Ladies* were so altered in shape as to deny the period, and changes had been made in *Le Coq d'Or* that seriously damaged the presentation. Moreover, while it was a considerable feat of memory to put on the great Massine ballets at all, the sharpness of detail had blurred.

A long stay in Europe with the present company may re-establish the glories of Russian ballet, but meanwhile it has greatly suffered in name, and those of us who remember its golden days under Diaghilev and in its second reincarnation under de Basil will find it difficult to convince the youngsters of its magic. We are indeed forced to the conclusion that our

own native effort – with the exception of one important angle – is on an immeasurably higher level than anything else to be seen in ballet to-day, at least this side of the Iron Curtain. I use the words ‘forced to the conclusion’, because any suggestion of smugness would be highly dangerous to the continuance of our effort. It is important to try to analyse the direction in which our superiority – and our one particular failure – lies.

The first thing that attracts one about both the Sadler’s Wells companies is the general excellence of the training, the similarity of style of all the dancers, and in particular the lyricism and very well-defined musical approach to dancing that can be felt in every interpretation. Things do not happen by accident. There is a true professionalism in all our companies’ work. It is this very professionalism that has dismayed so many of the ‘woolly-headed’ who are looking for a particular kind of excitement that they wrongly associate with Russian ballet. It is true that the Russian artist at his best can give out much more than our dancers, but it is quite untrue that this comes in a ‘happy-go-lucky’ spirit, and that Russian ballet at its best period was not highly professional in our sense of the word. In any case, this whole matter of glamour is to a very large extent a superstition. It is true that a certain reserve is characteristic of our dancers, but at its best this reserve is a national quality rather than a defect. Especially when it is accompanied by that lyricism that our finest dancers, such as Margot Fonteyn and Beryl Grey, possess to such a marked degree.

If ballet-lovers are looking for a spirit of enthusiasm that can be felt right across the footlights they cannot do better than visit the young and charming Second Company at Sadler’s Wells itself. These young dancers have given some of the most spirited performances that have been seen for a long time, more than matching the very vital Ballet Theatre of America.

In choreographic creation we have also excelled, and no one is doing more interesting work at the moment than Frederick Ashton. Musically, too, if we have not shown a great spirit of

adventure we have at least avoided some of the errors of taste of certain of our visitors. Where we fail – and to my mind fail badly – is in the matter of *décor* and costume. There the very creative Champs-Élysées Ballets – by far our most interesting and important visitors since de Basil first came in 1933 – have outdistanced all competitors. While others, and Sophie Fedorovitch is an exception, are for the most part inclined to think of *décor* and costumes as an embellishment, the French have seen them as part of the whole. It would be difficult to imagine a more perfect setting than Bérard's for that little masterpiece *Les Forains* or, to take a more ambitious work, Wakhevitch's for *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort*.

Boris Kochno, that most Parisien of Russians, has truly understood the Diaghilev formula in which he played so large a part, and he shows a genius for suggesting the theme of a ballet and then for finding the right 'parents' for it. This company is also fortunate in its close association with Jean Cocteau, who made the whole journey with Diaghilev, and who remains as young in idea as ever. French ballet shows the same quality as French films, and only the lack of a professional outlook in execution, though not in the planning, prevents it from having a far wider public. As it is, it is high time that we saw the Ballets des Champs-Élysées at Covent Garden, a worthy setting for its magnificent *décors*.

Together, Sadler's Wells and the Champs-Élysées company have inherited the Diaghilev tradition to the full.

CONCERTS IN LONDON

GEORGE DANNATT



REPERCUSSIONS of the Edinburgh Festival were experienced by the London concert audience with immense satisfaction, notably in the realms of chamber music and of opera. Virtuosity, alas so frequently the magnet which draws a big public, can and does from time to time mightily disappoint the more musically intelligent, who will be capable of appreciating that a virtuoso possesses not only a tremendous technique, but also personality, audacity, no nerves, and the services of a skilful concert agent. However good or bad a virtuoso may be as a soloist, it is feasible that when he joins with others of the same category in concerted music, that venture may be hazardous.

Six concerts of chamber music were presented by the B.B.C. at the Central Hall to commemorate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Schubert's birth and the fiftieth anniversary of Brahms's death. The players were Schnabel (Austrian, 65), Szigeti (Hungarian, 55), Primrose (Scot, 43), and Fournier (French, 41). It was quite possible that such highly-skilled soloists, undoubtedly classed by many as virtuosos, would prove incapable of adjusting their varying temperaments and individual prowess sufficiently for a successful interpretation to result; quite apart from the virtuoso element in their make-up, their nationalities and ages varied considerably. But fears of this nature proved groundless, and the glowing reports we had received from Edinburgh were fully justified, for their playing was superb and their interpretations stimulating and dependable. Moreover, the programmes were comprehensive and well balanced. Ernest Element was the second violinist in Brahms's splendid Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34 (conceived originally

as a quintet for strings, and also arranged as a duet for two pianos), and James Merrett the double-bass player in Schubert's early, but always refreshing, *Trout Quintet*, Op. 114.

The Vienna State Opera, Edinburgh's second memorable export for London consumption, brought to Covent Garden the first really satisfactory opera we have witnessed in that house since the season of 1939; the success of this versatile company was very largely due to the fact that the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra accompanied the Opera, in more senses of the word than one. The churlish and undignified resentment shown by two of our most recently formed and frequently unsatisfactory orchestras at the employment of the Vienna Orchestra was most unfortunate; those who did not witness the scene for themselves will, one hopes, be staggered to learn that, with a sort of Shavian irony, members of an orchestral body designated 'International' paraded outside Covent Garden wearing such slogans as 'We can play as well as they can'. Having experienced three of the company's productions, not to mention the most moving and dramatic performance of *Leonora No. III* I have ever heard, the answer was easy; they could not, and cannot. Orchestras and other performers are perhaps given too great a right to select a designation which, in the mind of the layman anyhow, creates the impression that they are inviolable. That this stand should have been taken with the state of Europe as it is at present is pitiable; all over the world little groups of fanatics are endeavouring to blow on the glowing embers of their own particular 'national culture', whereas the crying need still is for international understanding, and that brotherhood of men which Beethoven felt so passionately when he decided on the form he would adopt for the last movement of the Ninth Symphony – feelings which the great creative spirits of the world have inevitably experienced.

One of those great spirits is Ralph Vaughan Williams, perhaps the most actively creative mind of contemporary music.

Although one feels that only a comparative few appreciate the stature of the music-maker we have in our midst, the Vaughan Williams Seventy-fifth Birthday celebrations (b. 1872), in which the main lead came from the B.B.C., were memorable not only for the genuineness of the tributes, but for the performances of his music which resulted. Each of the several famous orchestras which performed at Edinburgh had indicated their wish to perform the *Fantasia on a Theme of Tallis*, and the lot fell to the Vienna Orchestra by virtue of their long establishment and international renown. Their performance was a tremendous experience, for their string playing is quite exceptional in its tone, brilliance, and *legato*; and yet there was something missing which our own string players would have provided; that indefinable 'edge' to the string tone which makes the work at once sorrowful and joyful, of the past and of the present, that curious intermingling of joy and woe which Blake understood so well, and which he perpetuated for us in his poems, just as Holst did in *Egdon Heath*, Hardy did in such a book as *Jude*, and Vaughan Williams has done and is still doing for us times without number. That Vaughan Williams is aware of this trait in our and in his own make-up is apparent from his Lectures, *Nationalism in Music*; frequently he alludes to the analogy of his own art and the equally creative art of husbandry – synthetic music, music without roots, has no place in his scheme of things.

A vast and enthusiastic audience acclaimed him at the Albert Hall, when he once again conducted his *London Symphony*. It is a work to which he appears particularly endeared, and he bestowed upon it, therefore, all the strict attention to detail one would expect, but always with the humility of true genius; the result was a memorable performance by the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra. Its antithesis was provided in a performance of the evocative *Pastoral Symphony* by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Beecham; a harsh rendering sadly lacking in humility and suffering from over-dictatorial direc-

tion, as did a fierce and virtuoso performance of Mozart's *Haffner Symphony* in the same concert. 'Many young composers make the mistake of imagining they can be universal without at first having been local,' wrote Vaughan Williams, and although his birthday celebrations must have taken place in many concert-halls and, through the wireless, in countless homes, none of us 'outsiders' will ever know just what he means to his neighbour-performers at Leith Hill where the universal man puts his beliefs into practice.

Hard on the heels of the Vaughan Williams celebrations came Richard Strauss in person, and what amounted to a minor Strauss Festival. Many concert-goers bestirred themselves to see in the flesh this renowned musical iconoclast, Strauss, eight years older than Vaughan Williams (b. 1864), completely undemonstrative, tiny and wizened. As a conductor he has always been famed for his restrained gestures and been pre-eminent as an interpreter of Mozart. His concert with the Philharmonia Orchestra included *Don Juan* and the *Sinfonia Domestica*, and with the B.B.C. Orchestra, *Till Eulenspiegel*. Strauss did little more than beat time with a small baton held at the end of a permanently extended right arm, keeping his left arm limp at his side, so that the effect was at once pathetic and brave. It was almost impossible not to think of the cataclysmic effect which the impact of his genius had made at the turn of the century upon creative musicians and concert-audiences alike, more particularly through the bold idiom of his tone-poems and operas. He obtained a fine performance of *Don Juan*, and a really magnificent one of his irrepressible *Till*. How one has from time to time turned the pages of the text-books on orchestration to try to savour in full the audacity of his instrumentation! Everything in *Till* still comes off to perfection, but it was the examples from the *Sinfonia Domestica* that one so frequently wished to hear – the quartet of saxophones, and the 'Seven o'Clocks' on the glockenspiel against muted violins and solo viola. Alas, the work proved to be nothing more than page

after page of very dull note-spinning with some attractive bars devoted to the cradle song; synthetic music at its worst, devoid of roots and so completely different from the operas and from the recent *Metamorphosen* and the Oboe Concerto.

The B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra and Women's Chorus conducted by Boult gave an exceptionally lovely and complete performance of Holst's *The Planets*; a conception in which every one of the daring orchestral effects is perfectly calculated, never drudging homework like the *Domestic Symphony*, and never interfering with the beauty of the whole. Consider, for example, the effective organ glissando in *Uranus*, and the use of the unseen chorus of female voices in *Neptune*. Holst, an innate musician, was a craftsman of the first order. A craftsman, that is, of the calibre of Shakespeare, of Vaughan Williams.

Shakespeare and Vaughan Williams: together they have created a timeless thing, a thing at once English as the English countryside and universal as the Finale of the *Ninth* – the *Serenade to Music*, given an admirable performance in the B.B.C.'s Silver Jubilee Concert. There is nothing of the virtuoso in this music, there was nothing of the virtuoso in that performance, only a combination of craftsmanship of the finest quality; as Ronald Duncan has remarked: 'We suffer from too many artists and too few craftsmen. We still suffer from those worm-eaten ideas and values which postulate that the abstract, the ether, the vague, is more profound than the practical, the solid, the precise.'

The timeless beauty of that music and of the words is inexplicable. Once more we are confronted with the paradox of nationalism; does the *Serenade to Music* mean something to us only, and nothing in particular to the Austrian? Even more absorbing a question, does that *Sinfonia Domestica* mean anything at all to the German? Vaughan Williams, 75, ageless, shall have the final word. 'Is it not reasonable to suppose that those who share our life, our history, our customs, our climate,

even our food, should have some secret to impart to us which the foreign composer, though he be perhaps more imaginative, more powerful, more technically equipped, is not able to give us? This is the secret of the national composer, the secret to which he only has the key, which no foreigner can share with him, and which he alone is able to tell to his fellow-countrymen.'

NORTHERN DIARY

SCOTLAND: MAURICE LINDSAY



By the time this issue of *Penguin Music Magazine* appears, the first Edinburgh International Festival of Music and Drama will be mainly a pleasing memory. People will remember the wonderful playing of the Hallé Orchestra under John Barbirolli in Elgar's Second Symphony: Bruno Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic in a perfect Beethoven evening and an equally perfect Viennese evening: Elisabeth Schumann, the Schnabel-Szegeti-Primrose-Fournier quartet, and so forth. But they will also be turning their thoughts towards the Festival of 1948, and wondering not only what it will offer, but whether or not it can gather that momentum which will be needed to make an Edinburgh Festival a yearly event.

That is a question which no one can really answer. The economic sky has darkened considerably since these blazing August days last year, when the *CRISIS* was only a newspaper heading, a far-off muttering of forces which hardly seemed to belong to the same world as the Glyndebourne *Figaro*, or the Old Vic *Richard Second*, or the carefree glitter of the historic Assembly Rooms decked out as the Festival Club. Certain it is that this second Festival will be the one on which the future turns, more surely than the last. Enthusiasm for something new was no doubt responsible for much of the support given to the first Festival. Even the weather was enthusiastic – Scotland had never seen such a summer for years. But neither weather nor human beings can be expected to have quite the same desire to patronize novelty this time.

I hope that some of the omissions and errors which marred the otherwise careful planning last year will have been over-

come by next August: such routine details as the issuing of proper seats to the Press, and the control of the non-festivalizing hordes who 'gate-crashed' the Festival Club, turning it into a rather sordid and silly scene of Bacchanalian excess once or twice.

On the artistic side, the chief omission last time was the almost total absence of Scottish representation in the music-making (and in the drama!), and the poorish quality of the little there was. If the Festival is to have that fertilizing effect which its organizers hope for, then they will need to see that the Scottish music which does come up to standard is given an honourable place. First and foremost come the songs of Francis George Scott, which should be given a recital to themselves. If we are to hear minor works by composers like Finzi and Rubbra, then there is no earthly reason why we should not also hear Cédric Thorpe Davie and Ian Whyte. The *Scottish Daily Mail* concert of Scottish music, held the day after the official ending of the Festival, perhaps demonstrated that Scotland cannot yet present an orchestral programme up to Festival standards of her own. But *The Scottish Orchestra* would do well to let up a little in their preoccupation with Czechoslovakia and include one or two Scottish works in their Festival concerts next year.

The Gaelic and Lowland folk-song concerts should be repeated in duplicate, for the charming Freemasons' Hall is not equipped with expanding walls, and last year many people could not get into these national concerts of international interest. Next time, too, the commentators should have a less verbose rôle to play, and the range of folk-song from which pieces are to be selected should be widened.

Meanwhile, the problems of the winter's music-making are with us. The Scottish Orchestra, once again under Walter Susskind, has begun a new season of concert-giving. Alas, the programmes for the Glasgow and Edinburgh concerts are sadly uninspiring! Box-office requirements no doubt necessitate the

regular appearance of all the hardy annuals, but surely Mr Susskind could have managed to work in somewhere a few older novelties, to say nothing of modern works by Britten, Tippett, or Alan Rawsthorne?

Some improvement has been effected in the string section, but the wood-wind and brass sections are still in need of a thorough overhaul.

Attendances at the lighter Sunday afternoon concerts have fallen away a little. This no doubt indicates that the people for whom music is least essential are feeling the general tightening of money, and deleting music from their list of affordable luxuries.

One Scottish newspaper, *The Bulletin*, recently published a leading article suggesting that the time had come for Edinburgh and Glasgow to sink their differences and to unite in appealing for money to transform the 'Scottish' into a truly Scottish National Orchestra. At the time of writing, it looks as if the 'Scottish' is about to slip quietly back into its rut of indifferent half-yearly life. So far, it has not been asked back to the Edinburgh Festival, so presumably another summer season seems out of the question to the over-timid and reactionary Management Committee. Meanwhile, there are strong rumours that the Edinburgh Founders' Guild have made considerable progress towards the establishing of a permanent orchestra in their city. If they do succeed, then the future of the 'Scottish' will become precarious. If it collapses altogether, the blame must lie fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the Management Committee. An infusion of young blood into this moribund body might yet produce a new, virile policy; but it is old in aggregate years, and has set its face against reform.

I have just space to mention the subscription edition of the songs of Francis George Scott which the Saltire Society, Gladstone's Land, Edinburgh, 1, is arranging. This will cost a guinea, contain thirty hitherto unpublished songs, and be in the form of a national tribute to Scotland's leading living composer.

LIVERPOOL: A. K. HOLLAND

Once an operatic stronghold, and for many years the headquarters of the Carl Rosa Company, Liverpool has shown for some time past a falling-off in the popular interest in opera. The repertoire of the touring companies has been sadly stereotyped and the productions somewhat meagre in scale. It was therefore with some small stir of excitement that we received at the beginning of the present season a visit from the Covent Garden Company, with a repertoire which, if limited in scope, was nevertheless fairly well balanced between box-office works and those of a more ambitious type such as *Rosenkavalier*, *Turandot*, and *The Magic Flute*. No doubt it was due to the activities of the revived Opera Circle and its indefatigable secretary that the houses were on the whole so satisfactory and that they contained a large sprinkling of young people. After a rather shaky start with the Mozart, which was full of first-night lapses on an unfamiliar stage, the tone of the performances improved wonderfully. In general the productions were much admired as being on a more careful and lavish scale than anything we have known in recent years, and both the orchestra and the chorus impressed us with their high quality. Not all of the solo singing was of equal merit, and it was here that some improvement will be looked for.

The concert-season itself started off without any great flourish of trumpets, and indeed with a disappointing series of cancellations among the individual recitals. As soon as the syllabuses were issued it became clear that something like a pre-war plenitude of events was in ^{the} store. Local musical activities showed some signs of revival, and on paper it looked as though we were in for a lively time. In fact, the chief problem seemed to be how to fit in all the claimants. With our limited concert-hall resources one serious defect has been the lack of regularity in the main series, that is, in the matter of dates and times, and

at least one series abandoned for the time being the subscription principle. The Philharmonic Society added to the complications by splitting one of its three series in half and holding these concerts alternately on Thursdays and Sundays. In addition, it has concerts on Tuesdays and Saturdays, but none of them provides a regular weekly event. One feels this to be mistaken policy, for it is surely obvious that at any rate a popular series should aim at establishing a habit. Of course there may be many other reasons to account for the comparatively erratic attendances that we have had so far this season – the petrol cuts, for instance, have not helped matters, and the general economic factor has no doubt played its part.

But that does not complete the tale. Impressed by the success of its experimental concerts for industrial firms, the Philharmonic extended the principle of the closed concert to a series of eight concerts, each run in triplicate. Here, too, there is no regularity of date. Now it ought to be the first requirement of a closed concert that it should be sold out, for it is manifest that the repetition of entire programmes can be justified only by the demand. But the demand of the fifty-odd firms associated with this venture has not altogether come up to expectations. The programmes are not essentially different from those of the ordinary popular concert, and it therefore becomes a question whether anything is really gained in the long run.

In a matter of programmes there has been a certain curtailment of modern works and the more expensive type of soloist. In the main series Sir Malcolm Sargent appears to have aimed at steering a middle course between the extremes of modernism and the more hackneyed classics, but there has been at least one significant contemporary work in each programme even if of the milder sort, and one or two rediscoveries, such as the delicious little Mozart Symphony No. 29 in A and, after a long absence, Schumann's D minor. The most impressive of the visiting conductors has again been Jorda, who established a

very keen and happy relationship with the orchestra and will be missed when he departs for South Africa. To our local conductor, Louis Cohen, has been assigned the charge of the schools concerts, but this is really a special technique and he would be better employed giving some popular concerts, as of old.

Little is to be said of the celebrity visitors, the same all the world over. Arthur Rubinstein, Menuhin, Moiseiwitsch all enjoyed the expected success if not quite the expected audiences in every case. Todd Duncan had a rather flat Sunday afternoon house, and while giving a distinguished recital achieved his biggest triumph inevitably in the negro spirituals.

Choral music has scarcely got under way at the moment of writing, but we had an interesting attempt by the Wallasey Singers to present an authentic performance of *Messiah* with a small chorus and orchestra and 'correct' instrumentation without additions. The enterprise of this choir is a reproach to the conventionalism of other bodies, the Philharmonic excepted.

Chamber music as represented by the Rodewald Society has shown a slight up-grade tendency, but the public is still rather small. The Blech String Quartet gave us Rubbra's quartet, a well-wrought if somewhat overloaded work, and the young Robert Masters Pianoforte Quartet played the Fauré in C minor and the light but pleasing string trio of Benjamin Frankel. Lunch-hour recitals in two centres are devoted mostly to pianists and singers, and have shown some taste in the choice of short programmes. But the city worker these days seems to have all too little leisure and attendances are rather feeble.

LEEDS: ERIC TODD

Municipal authorities in this country are notoriously shy of providing money for music. The trouble is that a musical performance has no capital value, whereas the pictures in an art

gallery or the books in a public library are tangible assets on a solid cash basis which can figure nicely in a balance-sheet. A guarantee against loss, strictly limited and usually grudgingly given, has in the past been almost the only form of financial help that any of our British orchestras has received from a municipality. When we first heard in 1945, therefore, that Leeds, together with some other West Riding authorities, contemplated establishing a full-time permanent orchestra at a cost of approximately £50,000 a year (less, of course, takings from concerts), it seemed too good to be true. Nevertheless, in spite of much local scepticism, the scheme finally came to fruition in March 1947, when Maurice Miles was appointed conductor and director and immediately commenced auditions for what was to become the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra.

The first concert, in Leeds Town Hall, given after a month devoted to rehearsal, showed that Mr Miles had already created an orchestra capable of precision, brilliance of execution, and considerable delicacy of interpretation. Further performances have confirmed that we have in the orchestra a responsive body of players and in Mr Miles a conductor of sensitivity and musicianship.

The players themselves are most enthusiastic about their new venture. The schedule of 120 concerts per year meets with their particular approval, for it leaves about twenty hours per week of available time for rehearsal. It is here that the secret of the success of the venture lies. No profit-making orchestra could afford to spend anything approaching this amount of time on rehearsal. Scamped and under-rehearsed performances have become a commonplace feature of recent years. Now at last exists an orchestra, free from financial responsibility, where preparation can be, and is, really adequate. Look to your laurels, Liverpool, Birmingham, and (dare we say it?) Manchester.

However, you need not worry too much yet, for we have one drawback which became only too obvious when I heard the

Hallé and the Yorkshire orchestras on successive days. We are woefully short of strings – thirty-five against a normal complement of forty-six. Something like £5,000 a year will be the cost of bringing up the strength of this department to satisfactory standard and, whilst this is considerably more than the proverbial ha'porth of tar, there is reason to hope that an enlightened authority which has had the vision to go so far in satisfying the cultural needs of a large population will not allow the ship to be spoilt for the want of this amount.

Just as we go to press I am gratified to learn that the strings of the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra are to be increased by the addition of eleven players.

The twenty-second Leeds Triennial Musical Festival aroused more local interest and enthusiasm than any of its predecessors during its long history. It is now possible to look back dispassionately and judge its artistic worth. No one would claim that the exceedingly high level of the best performances was maintained throughout, though none descended to the merely humdrum. Certain works were outstanding, notably the Verdi *Requiem* and William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, conducted respectively by John Barbirolli and Sir Malcolm Sargent. It is in such works as these, requiring fearless attack, great volume, and subtle dynamic changes, that the chorus shows its excellence and reveals the superb training it receives from that prince of chorus-masters, Herbert Bardgett. The orchestral work of the festival, taken in equal shares by the Hallé and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestras, was never less than satisfactory.

Many and varied were the compliments paid to the chorus, perhaps the most generous being the tribute of Dr John Ireland, whose cantata *These things shall be* was the opening work. His statement that there was nothing in London to approach their singing makes it all the more difficult to understand the attitude of the B.B.C., who found it impossible to broadcast any choral work during the festival. The early correspondence which was published on this matter seemed to

show a curious lack of appreciation of the national importance of this festival on the part of the programme staff of the B.B.C. One was forced to the conclusion that the neglect could be explained only by blank ignorance, and the young gentlemen concerned will be well advised to look the matter up in Grove's or, better still, note carefully the impressive list of first performances of major works as given in the prospectus. The commendable policy, which has been followed since the beginning, of encouraging British composers by commissioning new works for performance will, it is anticipated, be resumed for the 1950 festival.

To turn now to our other great choral body, the Leeds Philharmonic Society, whilst retaining their excellent balance, forthright delivery, and fine quality of tone, they still lack a guiding genius of the calibre of the late Sir Edward Bairstow, their conductor for so many years. Their programmes for the present season are, as usual, interesting without being wildly exciting: Elgar's *Kingdom*, Dyson's *Quo Vadis*, Delius's *Sea Drift*, together with the bread-and-butter performance of *Messiah* being the promised fare.

The Northern Philharmonic Orchestra, our mainstay for years as providers of instrumental music, faces a dismal prospect, having lost their corporation guarantee, the backing of the Arts Council, and their Saturday dates at the Town Hall. They are nevertheless making a gallant and not unsuccessful fight for existence with a series of Wednesday concerts.

Chamber music is more plentiful with the recently-revived Leeds University Concerts in the winter and the Leeds Concert Society's series during summer. Leeds Symphony Society and the XXV String Orchestra, the leading amateur bodies, each forsakes the beaten track for programme material, using their financial independence of public opinion in the best possible way by increasing our knowledge of the minor masters.

MANCHESTER: J. H. ELLIOT

The clouds that hovered over our principal musical society, the Hallé, condescended to show quite an expanse of silver lining shortly before the winter season began – differences with the B.B.C. were at last resolved, and the City Corporation made an encouraging response to the general desire that there should be some form of municipal subsidy – and this gave us all a good send-off.

A spate of activity followed. Pianists of varying degrees of renown formed a queue to give recitals of the same programme (or as near as makes no matter); Celebrities (with capital 'C') passed through in a trail of glory, albeit usually clashing wastefully with other events; the B.B.C. Northern Orchestra resumed its enjoyable Wednesday midday Proms in the Town Hall; the Tuesday Midday Concerts Society launched another admirable season; the Manchester Women's String Orchestra, founded a few years before the war and publicly blessed by Dame Ethel Smyth, gave concerts in and around the city; the Gorton Philharmonic Society – an amateur orchestra ninety-odd strong – carried on its sixtieth season with 'open rehearsals' at Belle Vue; and so on and so on, not forgetting the Manchester Chamber Concerts Society, founded in 1936 to help to fill a gaping hole in our musical fabric.

The Mendelssohn centenary was marked by a Hallé *Elijah* at Belle Vue, before an audience appreciably smaller than the average (*vide* my remarks in the last issue). Herbert Bardgett, the Hallé chorus-master, conducted a good all-round performance. Well, there are fine things in *Elijah*, but I am not sure about the blessedness of enduring to the end, notwithstanding choral assurances to that effect. And what a curious choice for a man of Mendelssohn's temperament! With the whole Bible to draw upon, he must needs pitch on this welter of anger, blood, and vengeance, depicting the Deity as a savage who plays with

loaded dice and scores points off his enemies with a superior command of black magic. Admitting the rugged grandeur of the character of the prophet himself, does Mendelssohn really take the measure of it? However, perhaps a centenary is no occasion for too close an inquiry.

No such piety need embarrass our survey of Bruckner and Mahler, who are rather in the air here just now. Why are this twain nearly always coupled, anyway? I am no ardent Mahlerite; but it seems to me – I speak, of course, entirely for myself, regretfully disagreeing with some respected connoisseurs hereabouts – that Mahler has at least originality, some humour, and a remarkable feeling for colour; and I find his nostalgia (finales of the *Song of the Earth*, Ninth Symphony, and so forth) extremely touching, if not quite so cosmic in its significance as some of his admirers believe. But Bruckner has none of these things, and I regard his simple-minded portentosity (if there isn't such a word there ought to be, for the sake of writers on Bruckner) with cold detachment. This is romanticism not so much in decadence as in second childhood. Apologists, from Tovey downwards, exhort us to listen to him with humility, to enter his kingdom as little children, so that we may grope with him towards some unspecified spiritual goal. Yet it seems to me that a composer of mettle will not ask to be met half-way: he will take you by the scruff of the neck and put you where he wants you. Imagine 'thinking oneself' into the mood of, say, Beethoven's Seventh – or, for the matter of that, the *Dance of the Sugar-plum Fairy*!

John Barbirolli did Bruckner's interminable Seventh Symphony at the tail-end of the preceding season, extra brass and all. (By the by, no one explained that the 'Wagner tubas' to which the programme note referred were assorted saxhorns, with cup-shaped and not funnel-shaped mouth-pieces – not that it mattered much.) Hardly had the new season begun when Josef Krips, as guest conductor, gave us sixty minutes of the *Romantic Symphony*, to which I listened twice without dis-

covering why most mid-Europeans, and more than a few distinguished Britons, hold the prolix Anton in such high esteem.

If I seem to be making a mountain out of a molehill – if one can so far strain terms as to describe Bruckner symphonies as molehills – put it down to malicious delight at having found something to grouse about in connection with the new Hallé, which I continue to contemplate with growing wonder and satisfaction. Barbirolli's services to music in Manchester, Bruckner's Seventh apart (and it is only fair to say that the audience seemed to like even that), must surely go down in history on some of the brightest pages. A few changes in personnel at the beginning of the season disturbed nothing. The new orchestra already has a tradition, a character, a corporate soul – call it what you like – that is strong enough to absorb fresh units without halting a moment in its grand developing stride. Where will it end? Well, if one knows Barbirolli, it won't: it will go on and on.

An event in September, when the Henry Watson Music Library was officially reopened (having moved to more spacious quarters in our Central Library), reminds me that I have not previously referred in these notes to this magnificent item in our list of amenities. Dr Henry Watson, sometime Professor at the Royal Manchester College of Music, started it all – with a discarded vocal score of Haydn's *Creation*. In 1899 he handed over nearly 17,000 volumes to the Corporation, and the library now possesses practically everything that an individual student is likely to wish to borrow or consult, as well as facilities for large choral societies (there are 264 copies of *Gerontius*, for instance, and more than twice as many of *Messiah*). There are also some valuable museum pieces on show, including a number of fine instruments and the Clésinger death-mask of Chopin, which is on permanent loan from the R.M.C.M. The librarian is John F. Russell, well known as a writer on music; he is, by the way, programme annotator for the Hallé Society.

BIRMINGHAM: JOHN WATERHOUSE

Music in Birmingham sits high and painfully on the horns of a dilemma. This distressing spectacle is now clearly apparent. One awaits anxiously some inspired suggestion as to how she may be lifted off, without tearing her skirts.

After a quarter-century of chequered approach, we have now had our City of Birmingham Orchestra established for three years on what looked as though it ought to be safe and comfortable and culturally fertile ground; with really sizable grants annually voted by the City Council, and a full-time basis of employment for the players; with concerts every Thursday and Sunday throughout the season, occasional Saturday 'Pops', Youth Concerts, regular school visiting, outside engagements near and far afield, and (for two years) a lively bout of 'Proms' when the season proper is over. It is a fine orchestra, with a brilliant young conductor in George Weldon. Clearly it is none the worse, in sum total, for a number of changes of personnel during the summer break. Though with less acute consciousness of gross understatement, we may venture to steal a remark from Manchester in the third issue of this magazine: 'Let us say, with becoming modesty, that we can now boast of possessing one of the finest orchestras in Britain, and leave it at that.'

On the heels of this theft, however, comes temptation to another, from the same issue: 'We ought to inquire', wrote Liverpool, 'to what extent this incessant orchestral activity has had a prejudicial effect on other forms of music-making.'

Alas, one has made this inquiry for some time in Birmingham, and come to the reluctant conclusion that the effect has been decidedly prejudicial. We are grievously over-orchestrated. All other forms of music-making wither, or fail to take post-war root. We can do without our procession of celebrity pianists, among whose ranks discouragement must be spreading. They always play the same things, and any genuine music-lover

could manage with one in a half-dozen of them. But all chamber-music ventures seem to have vanished this season, except for the heroic Ridgdowne Club, presenting its admirable programmes to wretched audiences at the Digbeth Institute; and the occasional remote but sumptuous Barber Concerts. Even the City Choir has to tread catfoot in choosing the music for its threefold annual activity. While the senior body, the Festival Choral Society, now revived after its wartime lapse and making fine progress under its new conductor Russell Green, desperately awaits evidence of public support.

There are, of course, many members of the 'new musical public' whose inclinations are solely orchestral, and who would not for the present be likely to attend the other concerts, anyway. But there can also be no doubt that a more musicianly audience for many of these other concerts is being lured to a weekly or twice-weekly orchestral habit, and has neither money nor time to spare for anything else.

Now for all this there would be consolation, however inadequate, if one could be sure that the Orchestra was safe. But it is not. Its expenses seem to be so huge that the Town Hall must be packed tight every Thursday and Sunday if it is to survive on its present footing. Though on the worst days the audience is never what an ordinary observer would be likely to call a poor one, urgent appeals for increased support are going out. Still more people must be persuaded to wreck their musical digestions on an all-orchestral diet, or Birmingham Music will begin to look like passing out altogether on her painful perch.

In the supply as distinct from the support of music, the season has opened remarkably well. The Orchestra's first programme-card was several degrees more adventurous than any before it, with a complete *Planets* to begin with, Bartók's third piano concerto, and several other newcomers to the repertory. Any sign of diminishing support always seems, with an odd suggestion of wishful thinking on the part of the committee, and with no visible evidence that I have been able to detect

(the Bartók was played to one of the best audiences), to be attributed to the announcement of modern or unfamiliar works; and the second card is less venturesome. The Ridgdowne Club has given a fine fourfold Schubert 'Festival', with all the mature chamber works (except the Octet, which was later supplied at a Barber concert), five early quartets, and a rather odd pendant to follow with Messrs Holst and Ridgway playing four violin-and-piano works. The Festival Choral Society has given a bold concert of modern British music, with Armstrong Gibbs's *Odysseus*, Vaughan Williams's *In Windsor Forest*, and Delius's *Cynara*.

And Birmingham, whatever its failures and muddles as regards the support and organization of other forms of music, can at least claim to be opera-minded. The enthusiastic standing-room-only response to the visit of the Covent Garden Company provided one sort of evidence. Another, and surer, may be gathered from a list of amateur productions, past and to come, for the 1947-8 season. As this bulletin has stolen twice from its colleagues already, it may as well do so again, this time for a contrast. Liverpool has written: 'Such local productions as there may be are confined to half a dozen stock operas.'

Birmingham's bill of fare this season is as follows: Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snow Maiden* (Midland Music Makers), Donizetti's *La Favorita* (Barfield Grand Opera Society), Weber's *Der Freischütz* (Midland Institute School of Music), Vaughan Williams's *Sir John in Love* (Clarion Singers), Inglis Gundry's *The Partisans* (Bourneville Works). Can any other provincial centre beat that?

DESULTORIA—II

N. L. SMITH



THE Autocrat of the Breakfast Table once suggested that the substitution of the word *dernier* for *premier* might sometimes give more force to the old proverb, *C'est le premier pas qui coûte*. He was making particular reference to public speaking, advising the would-be orator to be quite sure of his peroration before constructing the rest of the speech. But one sometimes wishes that composers of music would take the hint.



It was Samuel Butler (the *Erewhon* one) who said that Handel's was the only music that he could tolerate because Handel was the only great composer who knew when to stop.



Is it not natural to start thinking about catching the last bus when those interminable terminations (and Beethoven is not immune) get going? Tonic, dominant, tonic, dominant, tonic; tonic, *tonic*. Tonic, tonic, TONIC. Tchaikovsky has occasionally a tedious way of giving sledge-hammer blows on the head of a nail that has already been well and truly driven home.



I suppose it is rank blasphemy to suggest that the slow movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony takes, like the last of the Stuarts, an unconscionable time dying.



Almost in a class by itself in the matter of the conclusion is the F major Ballade of Chopin. Rorke in his *Musical Pilgrim's Progress* (to which I referred, possibly at too great length, last time)

likens it wittily, if a little cruelly, to the work of a third-rate novelist describing a motor accident; brakes out of order, worse and worse chaos, then a sudden pause, and then – the sweet voice of a good-looking nursing-sister in the casualty ward.

*

Actually Rorke was quite an ardent Chopin^omane (and why should this useful suffix be the monopoly of Ballet?), and he records the pleasant story about some children stopping their games in the garden to listen outside an open window to Chopin as he played that lovely little tune with which the Ballade in question opens (and closes in the casualty ward, so to speak).

*

One is a little reminded, in the above instance, of the major weakness of George Meredith. In novel after novel he sustains the sparkling dialogue, the brilliant character-studies, the ingenious plots and counterplots until suddenly, at the last chapter, utter boredom seems to set in and the principals are married off in parentheses or otherwise disposed of in the clumsiest possible fashion. Shakespeare has his own technique (in *Macbeth* or *Othello*, for example) of leaving the stage littered with corpses at the final curtain.

*,

If the music of 'swing' is to be taken seriously one cannot help noticing the habit (followed by Poulenc and probably others) of ending a composition in, say, C major with the casual interposition, at the very end, of a B flat. There is no law against ending a novel or a story with the words '... and then she wondered what might have happened if only she had ... FINIS.' But if one is supposed to go home with a dominant seventh ringing in the ears, one feels rather like Alice's 'Is that all?' when a certain poem insisted on ending with an 'if'.

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Edited by
RALPH HILL

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CONTENTS

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS: <i>Ralph Hill</i>	p. 7
THE FUNCTION OF THE COMPOSER:	
<i>Christian Darnton</i>	13
INTERPRETATION—FACT AND FANCY:	
<i>Herbert Byard</i>	21
THE AUSTRALIAN SCENE: <i>Neville Cardus</i>	27
RHYTHM IN PERSPECTIVE: <i>F. Bonavia</i>	33
GRIEG'S PIANO MUSIC: <i>J. H. Elliot</i>	40
PERSONALITY CORNER: <i>C. B. Rees</i>	47
BRAINS TRUST: <i>Julian Herbage</i>	52
NEW BOOKS: <i>Various</i>	56
NEW MUSIC: <i>Robin Hull</i>	79
GRAMOPHONE COMMENTARY: <i>Ralph Hill</i>	83
MUSIC OF THE FILM: <i>Scott Goddard</i>	88
MUSIC OVER THE AIR: <i>Denis Stevens</i>	91
OPERA IN LONDON: <i>Stephen Williams</i>	95
BALLET IN LONDON: <i>Arnold L. Haskell</i>	99
CONCERTS IN LONDON: <i>George Dannatt</i>	104
NORTHERN DIARY—	
Scotland: <i>Maurice Lindsay</i>	108
Liverpool: <i>A. K. Holland</i>	111
Leeds: <i>Eric Todd</i>	114
Manchester: <i>J. H. Elliot</i>	117
Birmingham: <i>John Waterhouse</i>	119
DESULTORIA—III: <i>N. L. Smith</i>	123

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THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

RALPH HILL



JE NE SAIS QUOI!

IT is a comical fact that so many British people suffer from a sense of inferiority over foreign languages. Few of us take the trouble to master properly even one other language besides our own; but most of us appear to be fascinated with the sight and sound of a foreign substitute for our own tongue, although we may not understand a word of it.

When we choose to dine at a genteel restaurant or hotel, where the vilest English food and the most slipshod English cooking are exploited with the utmost commercial success, I suppose it appeals to our sense of the exotic, or maybe it gives us a sense of cultural well-being, to read on the menu (not, of course, 'bill of fare') in French a list of the most unappetizing and ordinary English dishes!

In the world of music this love for a foreign language, which we do not understand, is both more intense and more varied. There is nothing more intolerable to the delicate susceptibilities of the connoisseur than opera in English. Better, indeed, to have Italian opera in German than in our own common and debased tongue, which some little lisping highbrows assure us is not suitable for singing. Thus, when the Vienna State Opera presented *Così fan Tutte* in German at Covent Garden last year nobody raised any objection!

If the programme pages of the *Radio Times* reflect anything they sometimes reflect a certain pseudo-musical superiority of the Third Programme over the Home Programme, a superiority

which is characterized by the unnecessary use of foreign languages in the titles of musical items. For example, I noticed the other day that on the Home Service the B.B.C. Orchestra was giving a performance of Mendelssohn's Overture *A Calm Sea and a Prosperous Voyage*; the next day on the Third Programme the same orchestra performed Mendelssohn's Overture *Meerestille und glückliches Fahrt*!

Although not one out of a thousand of us who listen to the Third Programme understands Portuguese, when a programme of Villa-Lobos's songs and piano pieces was broadcast recently, of course the Portuguese titles only were given in the *Radio Times*.

Again, although Italian may be the universal language for the technicalities of music, there is absolutely no reason for using the Italian word *Fantasia* when we have our own colourful and accurate terms *Fancy* or *Fantasy*. Even Vaughan Williams writes a *Fantasia* on a Theme of Tallis and another on Greensleeves. Then why not *A Sea Sinfonia* or *A London Sinfonia*? Even the Americans respect the use of our English term *Fantasy*!

Some of our music critics and musicologists make me wonder why they don't write their books and articles in French, German, or Italian instead of in inexpressive English. Consider, for example, my friend Cecil Gray. In his otherwise excellent book *Contemporary Music*, to illuminate certain points in his argument he quotes passages in French, German, Italian, Latin, and Greek without translations, although his book is addressed to the average intelligent listener, not to the scholar! In any case, if such quotations are essential for the full understanding of the argument, they ought to be translated into English. If they are inessential they should not be quoted.

Finally, the limit to language snobbery is reached when people persist in spelling Russian composers' names in the German style – Tschaikowsky and Strawinsky, for example. And what about Tschaikovsky's *Symphonie Pathétique* or Beethoven's *Sonata Pathétique*? Too stupid to be even comical!

Meanwhile in France, Germany, and Italy the gourmet consults a menu written in his own language; the musical connoisseur listens to foreign opera translated into his own language, unless the opera company happens to be a foreign one; and the composer writes a *Fantaisie*, *Fantasia*, or *Fantasia* (according to his nationality), but never *Fancy* or *Fantasy*, which would be foreign and therefore unnecessary.

NEW ERA CONCERT SOCIETY

A word of welcome to the New Era Concert Society, which is pursuing a similar policy to the old Courtauld-Sargent Concert Society in forming 'group members' among the staffs of business organizations. This Society, with its well-varied and progressive programmes, promises to waft a breath of fresh air into the musty musical atmosphere of the Royal Albert Hall. For this alone it deserves our full support. Richard Austin is the Society's music adviser, and the secretary is Miss P. Nunn (7 Queen Anne's Gate, SW1).

It is a pity, however, that the first issue of the Society's magazine should contain an article extolling the virtues of the mushy film-fan approach to music as against the more intelligent and thoughtful approach of the knowledgeable music-lover. The author is a *Dr* Ronald Hilborne, who 'looks after the musical side' of *Everybody's Weekly*. His statements that 'Handel, with tears streaming from his eyes, wrote *Messiah*' (all of it?) and that he has witnessed 'some' critics 'timing a conductor's interpretation with a stop-watch' might be good enough for the ingenuous readers of *Everybody's*, but they are singularly out of place in the magazine of a responsible Society, which exists for the propagation of the highest musical standards.

A TAILPIECE FOR MR DARNTON

It had been originally intended that Christian Darnton's article on *The Function of the Composer* (see page 13) should be in-

cluded in the *To Start an Argument* Series. Unfortunately at the last moment Mr Darnton's opponent did not put in an appearance, so I decided to substitute a few comments of my own. Here they are.

My first reaction to Mr Darnton's article is that he has dogmatically stated the function of the composer with the finality of the Creator of the Ten Commandments. I think it is a pity that he did not speak for himself alone instead of for all composers, as appears from some of his more emphatic generalizations.

Mr Darnton says it is the function of music 'to change the listener's attitude to reality'. If that is its sole function, then the puling of the crooner meets the music of a Beethoven symphony on equal terms! Mr Darnton claims that this change of a person's attitude to reality can be of two kinds: he emerges from a certain artistic experience either resigned to the 'inevitable' or determined to 'face up to things'. This seems to me to depend entirely on the particular listener and his mental and emotional make-up. I have met many listeners who are deeply moved by the emotional power of Tchaikovsky's *Pathetic Symphony* or Beethoven's Ninth, but they don't come away from a performance of these works with either suicidal intentions or empire-building aspirations. My experience has shown me that the lowest type of listener is the uncontrolled emotional type, which at its worst thrives on certain sex-ridden styles of jazz or the religious squirmings expressed in the music and singing of certain Welsh choirs. And as for the type which appreciates music only in terms of imaginary pictures, it is usually hopelessly insensitive to the more subtle aspects of musical art.

What Mr Darnton makes no allowance for is the appeal of music, which is based on the pure and unadulterated beauty of the sound itself. One can be emotionally moved by the contemplation and experience of this kind of musical beauty just as much as one can be by the contemplation and experience of beauty in Nature, or by a great painting of a landscape. We do

not ask the 'meaning' of Constable's *Weymouth Bay* or Turner's *The Snowstorm*; nor as lovers of painting do we want to know the social-cultural trend of Watteau's *The Ball under the Colonnade*. Such pictures remain fine pictures whether the viewer is an Atheist or a Catholic, a Communist or a Nihilist. And so with music: a Mozart symphony or Chopin prelude must be considered in the light of its musical values and implications; it is neither good nor bad because of its social-cultural trend, nor because of its emotional warmth or lack of it.

It is both the strength and the weakness of music that it can be made to mean, and does mean, all things to all men, and therefore men re-create music in their own sensuous and mental images. Indeed, to St Augustine it was both a science and a symbol of man's religious aspirations; to Plato it was a symbol of morality and ethics; to Carlyle a symbol of metaphysics; to Cyril Scott it is a symbol of Theosophy; to Rutland Boughton and the Communists it is a symbol of ideology. To every great thinker, who has been affected by music, and to every great sect from the early Christians to the Communists, one and all have re-created music in their own individual or collective images. It is indeed a touching and very revealing phenomenon.

The fact remains that music cannot (and will not) be tied down to any one religion, ideology, or philosophy. Its greatness as an art lies in its power to embrace and transcend any or all of them. Therefore, the function of the serious composer is to express musical thought and emotion in a way that first and foremost pleases him. If he happens to be a Thomas Ford (last period, of course!), a Raimondi, or a Schönberg, the pleasure he gives will be limited. But so long as he gives pleasure to someone – even if it is only his wife – such solitary communing is justified, to my mind. I should object to Schönberg's musical communings if it was decreed that I could have no alternative; but I should object equally strongly to be given no alternative to the mass communings of 'work-songs', however popular they might be with many of my dearly beloved fellow-beings.

Walter Sickert said: 'Pleasure, and pleasure alone, is the proper purpose of art'. But pleasure differs in kind according to the way that individuals and groups of individuals differ in mental and emotional make-up. Thus music provides pleasure for the intellectual and the sensualist, the idealist and the realist, the Communist and the Nihilist, the Catholic, the Protestant, and the Atheist. And it will remain the function of the composer to provide this infinite variety of pleasure until such time that all men think, feel, and act alike.

Incidentally, Mr Darnton's reading of musical history seems a bit odd to me. For example, he says that the decay of patronage as an institution eventually resulted in the fact that only composers with independent means were able to afford to devote themselves to composition! I cannot think of a single eminent composer of the nineteenth century who did not have to rely on his earnings as a professional musician, and with very few exceptions (and those mostly Russian) they came from poorish or very poor families – Brahms, Dvořák, Liszt, Verdi, Wagner, Elgar, etc. Who, then, were the 'luckless few' born with 'independent means'?

The truth is, as the Austrian musicologist Dr Frederick Dorian points out in his excellent book *The Musical Workshop*, 'In every century there are examples in which composer and pauper are synonymous, but also instances in which, owing to fortunate employment by the church or court, composers were protected from hardships. In the nineteenth century there are frequent instances of composers who were able to attain all the comforts of life as free creators, working without the ties of obliging and narrow contracts. They could afford what every composer needs – a refuge from the noise of the great cities, from their superficial fashion and covetousness, an "asylum" (in Wagner's word) where they could concentrate on their task in peace and solitude'.

THE FUNCTION OF THE COMPOSER

CHRISTIAN DARNTON



THE function of the composer is inextricably bound up with his status in the particular form of society in which he happens to live. His status is not constant. Moreover, to understand the function of the composer, we must also understand the function of music: that is, we must try to understand what it is that music sets out to do. These are the two fundamental considerations to which this inquiry will be confined.

The primary function of music is to transport the listener into a world of fantasy created by the composer, who, by a feat of imagination, enables the listener to return to external reality with a different attitude to it. Therefore the function of music is to change the listener's attitude to reality. In this it is not always successful. When it is, we can say (with certain reservations which cannot be expounded here) that the music is 'good'. Thus, it is the common experience of a person listening to music to have evoked in his mind a series of fantastic images. In some cases these images take on quite concrete forms, such as landscapes, clouds, and so forth, which present themselves in a manner not far removed from an authentic ecstatic vision, such as occurs in conditions induced by drugs and religious exercises, and in other states of selective hyperæsthesia.

This attribute of music is most clearly seen in what is commonly called 'programme music': music which has attached to it some literary or pictorial label giving the clue, as it were, to the fantasies which the composer intends to evoke. It is less clearly seen, but none the less present, in that other music usu-

ally known as 'absolute music'. An obvious example is the C sharp minor Piano Sonata of Beethoven, which has had tagged on to it the title *Moonlight*.

Whatever the emotive powers of certain music may be, whether they fall under some generalized heading such as 'cheerful', 'inspiring', 'gay', 'sad', 'gloomy', it is indisputable that, when music has any effect whatever, that effect on the listener is to evoke fantasies of some kind. And, having had various emotional states induced in him by virtue of the music, the listener is manifestly not quite 'the same' as he was prior to the experience.

In short, the music has done something to him. He feels – and is – in greater or less degree 'a different person'. That, in fact, is what music is for. *It is the function of music to do things to people.*

Music, then, has this quasi-magical power to transport people into a world of fantasy. We can say, further, that during the experience the listener, now in a suggestible state, becomes infected by some generalized emotional attitude, so that he returns to the world of external reality with his subjective attitude to reality changed. (The fact that this does not always happen – the fact that it happens to anybody only in the case of *certain* music – is a separate consideration.)

But before proceeding, note must be taken of an important point. If it is, in fact, the case that it is the power and function of music to change people's attitude to reality, it is clear that this change can be of two broad kinds: either the listener emerges from the artistic experience depressed and resigned to 'the inevitable'; or he may have instilled into him an attitude of courage and determination to 'face up to things', to fight ... A spiritual catharsis has taken place. Moreover, this function applies to the artist himself. It is a matter of common observation that works of art are born of toil and stress of varying intensity. The artist's personal conflicts with reality, his subjectively rebellious attitude to it, are thereby resolved.

From this it will be readily seen that if the content of the ideas which motivate the composer, and thus find expression in his music, finds common ground with those ideas which occupy prominence, consciously or unconsciously, in the lives of a section of the community, it will be that section of the community which will form his potential audience. The more points of contact between the composer and listener the greater the appeal of his music. Conversely, if the composer is preoccupied with personal problems which are largely peculiar to himself, and therefore have diminished interest for any substantial section of the community, it is, to say the least, a little much to expect that effective interest and response should be evoked.

It is therefore clear that the function of music is to express what others feel and are unable to express for themselves. Hence music has something of a revelatory character. The composer achieves his purpose by revealing new beauties. His rôle is in the nature of a leader, a moulder of public opinion. This entails serious social responsibilities, which will be examined in a moment.

When the composer ceases to 'express what others feel and are unable to express for themselves' he cuts himself off from life. He is withdrawn from the popular struggles, aspirations, and day-to-day activities of the people. He shuts himself up in a world of his own, which has little similarity to or contact with the fantasy-wishes of the community of which he is a member. His art is largely unintelligible to them. In certain instances he is driven to employ a private language of his own, which a bare handful of initiates can comprehend. It is not intended to be understood. This is the abnegation, the utter rejection, of his social and artistic responsibilities.

It is not for a moment suggested that merely because certain music is not immediately appreciated in its own day, it is therefore necessarily to be condemned. What has been said is that the eclectic introversion, the attitude of solitary communing, on the part of the composer, produces only a special, private

kind of music which is severely limited in its appeal. Such is the music of Thomas Ford in his last period (1626-48) and of William Lawes (1602-45). Such music does not significantly 'express what others feel and are unable to express for themselves'. The 'truths' revealed in such music have not a high degree of social correspondence, either in its own time or at any later period. The degree of success attending a work of art is therefore dependent on the ability of the artist to externalize his own problem-conflicts by making them of general, public, concern. He can do this only if his art is a reflection of dominant social-cultural trends in society.

To take an example from our own day, it cannot be said that music of the twelve-tone Schönberg school fulfils these desiderata. The eclecticism of this special kind of music, its almost exclusive preoccupation with morbidity, gloom, and despair, correspond not to the dominant social-cultural trend of to-day, but to a diminishing circle of similarly afflicted cognoscenti, who alone, by virtue mainly of privileged social opportunities which have enabled them to devote themselves to cultural pursuits to a highly rarefied degree, are at the moment able to 'appreciate' such music. It seems reasonable to expect that by the time the extension of musical education and appreciation can render the present startling novelties of sound less fearsome, the special evocations of this music will no longer correspond to the general needs of the mass of the people.

It was said above that the function of the composer is inextricably bound up with his status in the particular form of society in which he happens to live; and that his status is not constant.

Thus, in primitive communities the 'composer' is not only a poet but a performer as well. Music has no separate existence from poetry. Moreover, the art of 'composing', as we know it to-day, is non-existent. The form taken by this art is the *sung dance*, with a solo verse and a choral refrain. This still persists to-day. These are the mimetic dances of primitive tribal com-

munities, vestiges of which still exist in various parts of the world. Their purpose is magical. Their aim is to bring about certain desired ends, such as fertile crops, rain, or victory over an enemy. There are also work-songs, such as rowing songs, reaping and harvesting songs, spinning and weaving songs. All of these sung dances are performed in the belief that they have the magical attribute of affecting external reality. This belief is mistaken. Nevertheless, the mimetic dances do in fact fill people with enthusiasm so that they work harder in the fields, and thus actually do assist in improving the harvest; and the work-songs, whose rhythms and metres correspond to the muscular movements entailed in the task, have the effect of making the work easier, so that it is done more efficiently.¹

The sung dance has changed the people's subjective attitude to reality, and thereby ends in affecting reality itself. The artist, if we may call him that, is fulfilling his social function of expressing what others feel and are unable to express for themselves.

The development of society by division of labour resulted in class-society. This division of the community also resulted in the creation of a minority of active producers and purveyors of music and a large majority of passive consumers.

Until this point in history, music was an integrated expression of communal life, of the collective consciousness. It is only when we come to later, in fact quite recent, developments of society that music divides itself (and is divided against itself). And this division already reveals a lack of harmony in society. It reveals different, even conflicting and opposed, interests. On the one hand, there is music for the courts and the ruling classes generally; on the other hand, there is the music of the ordinary people – folk-music. It is demonstrable that music and society are barometric indices of each other. The conclusions to be

¹ I am indebted to Professor George Thomson for this illuminating observation. I have also applied his description of the evocative function of poetry in the analysis given above. See his *Marxism and Poetry* (Lawrence and Wishart).

drawn from this provide us with the key to understanding the status, problems, and functions of the composer in the world to-day.

This division of society into active performers of and passive listeners to music has had profound repercussions on the character of the music, the social function of the new type of professional musicians, and the purely passive audiences.

First: the character of the new-born Art Music changes violently from a musical rite in which everyone participated into music designed to be listened to – passively, in silence, and inhibiting bodily responses. Secondly: creative and interpretative musicians became a professional caste. They had in them the germs, later developed to a tragic degree, of becoming beasts apart. Thirdly: the new, passive, audiences eventually developed into a section of the community which *paid* for the privilege of indulging its musical appetites.

Thus already in the eighteenth century in Europe the movement of society sowed the seeds of Commercialized Music. This was an entirely new phenomenon, which arose in correspondence to the Industrial Revolution, of which it was a product. Music, or a large part of it, became a *commodity*, an object of exchange-value, which was bought and sold. For, up to the era of the Industrial Revolution, composers had at all periods been objects of patronage in one form or another. For historical reasons which cannot be gone into here the Industrial Revolution resulted in the decay of patronage as an *institution*. Composers found themselves, quite suddenly, one may say, cut adrift. From this point in time only those who possessed what is quaintly called 'independent means' were able to afford to devote themselves to this discouraging occupation. These luckless few, born with these insane gifts, were regarded as renegades and social pariahs. They were the ones who revolted against 'following in father's footsteps'. They rebelled against the traditional occupations expected of them: of entering the family business, or at least going into the Army or the Church. They

were regarded – and eventually came to regard themselves – as odd and peculiar people. ‘Different.’ That’s what they were. And, being told they were odd, they became odd. They were ‘unconventional’. They behaved and dressed eccentrically. ‘Bohemianism’ had come into being. They formed cliques, rejecting the commercial standards and moral values of the only world they knew. Anarchism – social anarchism, moral anarchism, political anarchism, and artistic anarchism – was the inevitable outcome. Deliberately, one may say, they cut themselves off from the world. They disdained, if one may so put it, the rich for being so rich and the poor for being so poor. They ceased to recognize or to possess any social affinities. Less and less did they ‘express what others feel and are unable to express for themselves’. Their art became more and more recondite, more abstruse; more concerned with ‘purely artistic’ problems, less concerned with what is, perhaps, the greatest problem of any artist: how best to convey his meaning; more interested in abstract theories, less interested in practical application; more absorbed in themselves, less affected by the outside world.

Thus the composer, turned out of the palace, and escaping through the back door from Wimbledon, retired to his Ivory Tower. The interesting, and in some respects tragic, consequences of this social attitude cannot be dealt with here.

There is space only to comment that just recently there have been most welcome signs that the composer is emerging from this enforced retirement. Recent developments – particularly in the emergence of cinema film as a new medium of expression – have provided the opportunity for the composer to place at least one foot on the ground. Radio plays, the growing custom of commissioning incidental music for the theatre, and other promising developments such as the possibilities provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain, the British Council, and so forth, are most hopeful signs.

The musical scene to-day is riddled with complexities. The most urgent problem confronting composers is the division of

music into quasi-eclectic Art Music of the concert-hall and quasi-popular Commercialized Music of the Palais de Danse. (Folk-music is no longer a *living* force in the English cultural scene: it was killed, along with the other peasant arts and crafts, by the Industrial Revolution. Commercialized Music has taken its place.) The composer cannot bridge this cultural gulf unaided. He cannot do so precisely because it is not a solely musical question. The cultural gulf is the outcome of the social gulf, which at present narrowly restricts his potential audience.

But this is not to say that nothing can be done now. On the contrary. The better the composer is able to 'express what others feel and are unable to express for themselves', the more will his music become widely accessible, appreciated, and understood. He can do this only if he recognizes himself as a member (albeit a highly specialized member) of our community, with a common cultural and social heritage of which he, and all of us, may well be proud.

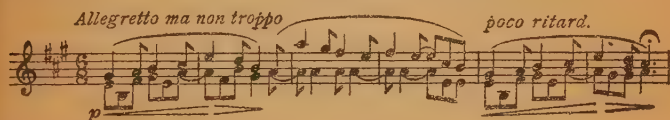
This, in fact, is happening now. The outlook is most hopeful.

INTERPRETATION— FACT AND FANCY

HERBERT BYARD



THE other day a well-known pianist played Beethoven's Sonata in A, Op. 101. The right-hand opening passage reads:



but what he made of it, as nearly as I can set it down in musical notation, was:



And so on, for the 102 bars of the first movement, which is one of the best examples in all Beethoven of a sustained lyrical flow. Now, if this pianist really intended the music to sound as it did, with its exaggerated *rubatos* and variations of dynamics, and sudden halts and rushes, I assert that he has not begun to understand how the composer wanted it played. It is true that Beethoven adds a long German phrase, which Tovey translates as 'A little lively and with deepest feeling', to the conventional Italian direction, but this is no warrant for a shapeless and irritating performance.

Unfortunately, this sort of 'interpretation' is only too familiar. Probably there have never been so many solo per-

formers competing for public attention as now, and the habit has become widespread of superimposing on music, especially that of the classical masters, wretched quirks and fancies, in order to give an individual twist peculiar to one particular performer. No one pretends that any music, outside the military-band repertoire, should plod along in dead strict time from beginning to end, but modern vagaries of speed often completely destroy that rhythmic urge without which any music, slow or fast, is lifeless. People who pay scant attention to note values, speed indications, and rhythmic pulse may be reminded of Chopin's dictum that the student should first play his music in strict time, and then *rubato*, making sure that the second performance lasts exactly as long as the first and that the first and last notes of every phrase sound on the right beat, however free the inside of the phrase may be. The *rubato* thus happens within the structure of the piece, and the underlying rhythm is not obscured.

Interpretation is largely a matter of putting first things first, and one of the worst signs of the modern 'personality' craze is the way in which we so often exalt the performer above the music. Among the concert advertisements in my daily paper recently was one of a performance by a star opera singer. Her name appeared in capitals three times, mixed up with blurb about 'the greatest living exponent' and so on; the orchestra and conductor were each mentioned once and the agent promoting the concert twice; but there was not the slightest clue as to what music was being done. Most of us are familiar with the kind of poster which informs us in enormous type that a bevy of famous soloists, with a chorus of 1,000 voices and three orchestras, directed by four distinguished conductors, may be enjoyed on some auspicious occasion; the affair being promoted by a newspaper or high society clique and the whole proceeds being given to the pet charity of the day, but no space being found for even the smallest print to tell us what we may expect to hear. When we drift into the habit of so wantonly putting

the emphasis in the wrong place it is not surprising that constant distortion of composers' directions is accepted without demur. Thus, one conductor will decide that *stringendo molto* is what Vaughan Williams meant in his Tallis Fantasia when he wrote *poco più animato*; another thinks that the end of Brahms's C minor Symphony requires certain wind passages to be reinforced with drums; a violinist fools about so much with his first entry in the slow movement of Beethoven's Violin Concerto that the orchestra, which has the main tune, sounds as if it is having prolonged hiccups. A sad result of this sort of thing is that indiscriminating audiences, bamboozled perhaps by the physical contortions with which these tricks are executed, break into rapturous applause at the close of the work. (Or, as frequently happens, before it is over. It is time this disgusting behaviour was stopped as being too vulgar even for Prom audiences.)

We have much to learn about artistic integrity and the reverence due to great music. Take, for instance, the mammoth performances of *Messiah*, designed more for the physical exhilaration of the participants than to give a faithful representation of Handel's music. This typical British sport seemed to be dying out before the war, but has been revived lately, and we have just been treated to an heroic display in which 1,000 singers made nonsense of choruses like *Worthy is the Lamb*, simply because semiquaver passages could not be brought off by such a multitude with the precision necessary to make the note pattern intelligible. Handel is reputed to have seen Heaven opened when he conceived the *Hallelujah Chorus*: on this occasion the effect was rather as if the jaws of the other place were yawning for their prey. The music is too noble to be bowdlerized like this.

What is the remedy for abuses which masquerade as 'interpretation'? The best way to find the answer is to look at the other side of the question, and to realize that the multitude of symbols used in musical notation is quite inadequate to bring a composer's intentions to light, even when, as with much of

Elgar, every bar is peppered with indications of speed, intensity, and other forms of expression. How much more difficult, then, is the proper performance of, for instance, Bach, where generally not much more than the mere notes is given, though they are often bedecked with ornaments about the precise meaning of which even the best scholars differ. The truth is that any act of performance is in itself an interpretation, which is not something extra grafted on to a piece of music by a clever performer. Sincere and well-informed musicians often come to very different conclusions when there is any doubt about a composer's exact intentions. The two best readings I have heard of the Evangelist in the *St Matthew Passion* are those of Steuart Wilson and Eric Greene. Both are fine artists, both have made an intensive study of the part, and yet their renderings are quite different. I know which I prefer, but I should not like to be dogmatic about either solution of the very involved problem of how to make artistic sense of Bach's recitative. His *continuo* parts present an even greater difficulty, for the keyboard players of his day improvised a 'filling-up' from a few bass notes, sometimes not even completely figured, and their art has been dead for a century and a half. Often we cannot be certain what instruments Bach intended for the *continuo*, let alone exactly what was played. In such cases we can but choose the interpretation which seems best, and urge scholars and musicologists to go on with their researches.

Modern music gives less trouble, thanks to the lavish way in which composers now mark their scores, but even so the way is not always plain. One would naturally wish to accept as definitive a reading of a work known to have the composer's approval, and in the case of a composer-conductor there would seem to be no room for doubt. But what of Elgar, who conducted his own works all his life and – in his oratorios, at any rate – completely revised some of his speeds and dynamics in the 1920s? According to some critics, Strauss gave similar indications of second thoughts when he conducted here in 1947. This should

warn us to be on our guard when we hear reports of a 'correct' interpretation of some great work.

Dissatisfaction with wayward renderings of older music has led to the rise of a school of academic purists, who demand, among other things, that instrumental music should be performed only by the instruments for which it was written. They have been encouraged by the great work done by the Dolmetsch family, Canon Galpin, and others in reviving ancient instruments. But purists are often afflicted with prejudice and refuse to recognize the steady improvement in instrumental technique and construction during the past two centuries. How many domestic pianists would relish having to revert to the thin-toned *forte-piano* of Beethoven's day for their performances of the so-called *Moonlight Sonata*? How many Bach enthusiasts would not feel unhappy if in all future performances of the *Passions* they had to endure early eighteenth-century oboes, which would sound unbelievably strident to modern ears? Surely we can only assume that the older composers would welcome the refinements of tone which are available to us. The important thing is to ensure that such improvements do not beguile players into a mere display of technique. Electric action, pedal boards shaped to fit the natural swing of the feet, and similar delights enable modern organists to gambol through Bach fugues at a hair-raising speed, though one hopes that Fernando Germani's recent magnificently spacious Bach broadcasts may have caused some of our native players to reconsider their ideas. Léon Goossens has added to the pastoral qualities of the oboe a vibrato which is often most effective, but unfortunately it has been slavishly copied by legions of wind players, with the result that concerted wind passages from the modern symphony orchestra generally sound as if they were being played on a cinema organ; and nowhere is this more disturbing than in older music, the composers of which would have regarded excessive vibrato as a sign of bad breath control or a faulty instrument.

The more one thinks about them the more involved interpretative problems seem to become – but every practising musician ought to face them. A great fault in modern music teaching is that 'Interpretation' and 'Technique' are generally treated as separate studies, whereas really technique is part of interpretation. Preoccupation with finger technique to the exclusion of musical considerations results in the mechanical and lifeless performances we all abhor; concentration on 'getting to the heart of the music' (an overworked phrase covering a multitude of sins) to the neglect of technical practice leads to slipshod and inaccurate renderings which are no better than plain lies. Fidelity to the printed text, unless the performer believes that it contains actual mistakes, is a prerequisite. Having paid meticulous attention to what is in the score, he can make full use of his artistic imagination in supplying that which no composer can fully indicate, however many marks he may scatter over his manuscript. But imagination must be disciplined by intelligence and wide historical and technical knowledge. The latter qualification is too often ignored, and so we find singers with no sense of style treating Purcell and Wolf in the same way; conductors taking a Wagner sledge-hammer to crack the nut of a Mozart *divertimento*; organists failing to realize that Bach's *Sleepers, Wake!* prelude is not a lugubrious funeral march but a heavenly dance, and similar misconceptions.

Granted the best of artistic good manners, interpretative mistakes are bound to occur, and musicians must never be afraid to revise their readings. The pre-war performance Casals gave of the Elgar 'Cello Concerto was decried as a complete misunderstanding of the work, but about two years ago he returned to London and gave a fresh interpretation which was acclaimed as a triumph. It was a lesson in æsthetic honesty to all of us. We are thrilled when an artist communicates to us some of his inspiration; let us beware of the false thrills induced by mere perspiration.

THE AUSTRALIAN SCENE

NEVILLE CARDUS



THE two Australian names most famous at the present time are, I suppose, Melba and Bradman; and that they should be regarded as symbols of this distant country is only one more proof that popular instinct for representative people is sound. Melba and Bradman have not only put Australia on the map in the eyes of millions to whom the land is regarded generally as a place built by a far-seeing Providence for the reception of remittance men. ('As for you my language fails – Go out and govern New South Wales!', as the infuriated parent says in the verses of Hilaire Belloc.) Melba and Bradman, as great exponents in their different spheres, not only achieved renown: they achieved it exactly as Australians would – by realistic efficiency added to natural gifts. Imagination scarcely ever endangered the ability of either. Australia, a very young country, has not yet reflected enough to develop that inward habit of mind which is the source of reflection. Again, there is climate and scene – always enforcing themselves on your attention. It is nearly impossible in Australia not to accept, as a matter of course, the external universe as an unambiguous reality.

In such an atmosphere and habitat we should naturally not look for an intensive culture of the mind. We should expect the arts, if any, to traffic empirically with paint-box and canvas, with the more lifelike sorts of drama and with ballet. And painting and ballet are indeed practised with much skill in Australia; but there is no professional theatre worth the attention of a mind of greater subtlety than the next scullery maid's.

The one art which holds the public almost all the year round in Australia is the most subjective of all, the most abstract – music. Or perhaps it would be safer to say, concerts. It is gently ironical for an Englishman resident in Sydney to read of the oburgations necessary on the part of English conductors and musical authorities to wring subsidies out of city councils and what-not. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra enjoys a grant of £60,000 a year. From the State Government comes £20,000; the city of Sydney provides £10,000; and the Australian Broadcasting Commission guarantee the rest. Last June, Eugene Goossens arrived here from Cincinnati to conduct the Sydney Orchestra, and also to direct the State Conservatorium of Music at a salary of £5,000 a year. There is actually a subsidized string quartet in Queensland – the least sophisticated of Australia's more or less populated places. In Adelaide and Melbourne the universities contain music colleges (they like the word 'Conservatorium' over here); and Melbourne shares with Sydney the privilege of being able to hear a considerably integrated orchestra.

It is a strange thing – a land with concerts and no theatre and no literature to speak of. Is music, after all, an art which makes slender demands on the intellect or thinking-parts? To understand a play calls for some effort of grey matter, some knowledge of life, manners, and logic of circumstances. A concert audience needs lend only its ears. Music, subtlest of all the modes of expression of the imagination, is able as well to titillate the senses. Besides, there is always the conductor to look at, and the trombones emptying themselves ...

I am no more satisfied, then, that crowded concerts denote that Australia is musical than I am satisfied with evidence of the same sort at a London Promenade Concert. Especially as it seldom happens in Australia that an orchestral concert is given without the support of a soloist. Much more hopeful was the 'rush' (I can use no other word) for tickets to hear the Boyd Neel players when they made a tour last year, including New

Zealand. And the silence of the listening – and the spontaneous applause at the end. Another favourable sign was packed halls for concert performances of *Peter Grimes* and *Lucretia*. There are bound, in a newish country, where action out of doors is hard to resist in the young, to exist many embarrassments to objective judgments upon the cultural scene. One day I am prepared to swear that Australia is – in a 'Pickwickian' sense, of course – barbarian in the aggregate. Then, next day, some straw shows the way of a promising wind. The place is a melting-pot; bubbles of sustenance, bubbles of scum. So far, it's half-a-dozen of one, six of the other. There is no tradition of seriousness yet, or – because music should charm as well as reveal the spirit – there is no delight in the gesture of art. The Australian is in bulk a materialist. He goes to a university to learn a profession, in the main. He (or rather she) studies music with an eye sooner or later to an engagement, a photograph in the 'press', and a 'write-up', as they call all criticism appearing in print.

But we must, in all early stages, *stress potentialities*. This vast and comparatively uninhabited continent, which boasts the second most densely populated city in the Empire, a country terribly isolated from the rest of the world until the advent of flying-boat and airmail, has already made a contribution to the executive side of music; we need mention only the names of Melba, Austral, Buckman, Marjorie Lawrence, William Murdoch, Eileen Joyce, Brownlee, Grainger, and Harold Williams. And I give this list with the saving clause – 'E. & O.E.' Technical performance is not unimpressive. When Beecham conducted the Melbourne Orchestra in 1940, he expressed the opinion that they played Mozart for him in no way inferior to any average body of instrumentalists in England. Revelation was vouchsafed a few years afterwards by Ormandy, who came from Philadelphia and transformed the orchestras out of recognition. From the Sydney Orchestra he produced a tone, an attack and balance and freedom of movement, which we had to call

'stream-lined'. His interpretation of the Fifth Symphony of Shostakovitch persuaded me for the moment – but not longer than that – that this work is a masterpiece. But a week following Ormandy's return to America, the orchestra lapsed to its usual workmanlike competence.

Much depends now on Goossens. He has begun his work with energy and ambition. He has even announced a determination to make the Sydney Orchestra 'the sixth best in the world'. The identity of the five others is left to our powers of conjecture. His chances would be better if he were free to devote the whole of his time to the task. With his left (or his right) hand he will be occupied in holding up the solid world of the State Conservatorium – a dual responsibility which conjures to the mind the vision of an overworked Atlas. He, in addition, dreams of opera-houses, vast annual choral festivals. Next season he will cope with the Eighth Symphony of Mahler, the 'symphony of a thousand'. His programmes next season take in their stride the *Symphony of Psalms* of Stravinsky, the *Children's Crusade* of Pierné, the *Hungarian Psalm* of Kodaly, the First Symphony of Mahler, the latest symphony of Rubbra. Meanwhile, in the heat of an Australian summer, Melbourne is about to experiment with a season of opera. Melbourne and Sydney, five hundred miles separated, do not recognize one another. It was Melbourne who, in the remote radio-less past, first tilled the soil. To-day Professor Heinze holds the Ormonde Chair of Music at Melbourne University. During the war, when Australia was cut off from the centres of music, he maintained the standards of orchestral playing, and with one or two divagations and vicissitudes, gave admirable performances of *Sea Drift*, the two Elgar symphonies, the Bruckner Seventh, a whole Beethoven, and a whole Brahms festival, *Belshazzar's Feast* of Walton, Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* and *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Solid pioneer work was, in the same trying period, done by Percy Code, who conducted the first performance in Australia of Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony (and it was

a very beautiful one), and a performance of the Arnold Bax Violin Concerto, in which the solo part was played, as well as I have ever heard it played, by Ernest Llewellyn, who is leader of the Queensland String Quartet. A distinguished asset to Melbourne's music is Hephzibah Menuhin, who from time to time comes out of the seclusion of a lovely home to play a *concerto* or take part in a chamber *ensemble*.

We must bear in mind, when we discuss music in Australia, that our comparisons cannot be fairly made with London standards. The measurement should be between cities of much the same size and character. London is a cosmopolis. There is certainly no comparison at all if it comes to a conjunction of, say, Sydney and Leeds, or Melbourne and Edinburgh. I have for seven years found it possible to work hard in Sydney and earn a salary of a figure not offered in England to any except one or two of the most celebrated of London critics. I have not needed – as you might imagine I *had* to need – to *think* of cricket. In that period I heard a variety of works more extensive than anything given over a like number of years in Manchester, from Lekeu to Britten, from Palestrina to Roy Harris. The Australian's approach to music is one of curiosity. He (or rather she) will listen to anything. And it is usually a girl or a woman who takes the lead in public appreciation. The men are obsessed by an antique timidity in the presence of the arts; they are afraid of being called 'sissy'. I have occasionally pointed out to them, in print, that Villon was, by this curious token, also a 'sissy', and that, he-man though he, the Australian, might think himself to be, he would run for his life were he to encounter Villon, or Raleigh or Oscar Wilde or one or two others who wrote poetry, on any dark night in the Soho of Australia, which is called King's Cross.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission shoulders a heavy responsibility in the age of Australia's musical growing-pains. It has to compete against commercial radio – a fearsome thing, God wot. On the whole the A.B.C. does its good deeds – but

a broader and braver vision is wanted now. Australia, in fact, lacks leaders altogether. If I may quote from a personal experience, to prove my hopefulness in this country's musical future, I was asked seven years ago to give a series of Sunday evening talks on music, each of an hour's length, with illustrations by gramophone. The original plan was that these talks should, as a sort of trial, extend to ten, and not be too 'highbrow'. I began with a sort of panorama – 'A day in Vienna' – examples from Johann Strauss to Bruckner, a walk through the city with one or two touches of sentimental description. Next week I spoke about a Beethoven symphony, or some such. Then I grew a little bored. One day, while walking through the wonderfully comprehensive record library of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, I came upon Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. The following Sunday I devoted the whole of my session to this work, with an analysis of Mahler's methods, quotations in advance of the performance from the music; and I made a new translation of the verses and read them over the air before each movement. Next week I was snowed under by letters of appreciation, not only from the known and charted places of intelligence but from the remote outbacks, the solitary interior. It was all very surprising and moving. This weekly session, which I call 'The Enjoyment of Music', has continued, with only one or two rests, until to-day. I have presented all sorts – but only the best. I have given *Das Lied von der Erde* six times; Hugo Wolf is almost popular. The *Requiem* of Fauré was – as you might say – encored. It is with mixed feelings that I shall say 'Good-bye' to Australia in a week or two. I shall feel like a gardener leaving his garden, perhaps too soon. There are still one or two weeds to pull up and, I think, still one or two roses worth a little more cultivation.

RHYTHM IN PERSPECTIVE

F. BONA VIA



ALTHOUGH musicians, as a whole, know what is meant by the word 'rhythm', writers have not found it easy clearly and briefly to define it. The author of the excellent article in Grove's *Dictionary*, for instance, begins by telling us that while 'Italy, France and Germany have meant by "rhythm" the larger distributions of metre ... in English "rhythm" means something more personal'. Now if there is an art which uses an international code, that art is music, and 'rhythm' is part of its code. When Richter conducted in Manchester he often used the word 'rhythmus' at rehearsal. His orchestra consisted of able, willing, and intelligent musicians who, for the most part, had never tried to ascertain the exact meaning of words. But they all knew what their conductor meant. It is perfectly true that, as the writer in Grove notes, we speak of a slow rhythm when we mean slow pace, that 'period' describes more accurately than 'rhythm' the grouping of a number of bars. But since the word has been so used by Beethoven ('RITMO DI TRE BATTUTE' and 'RITMO DI QUATTRO BATTUTE'), it may well be argued that his authority and general custom authorize us to use the word to include the meaning he gives to it.

Musical rhythm is distinct from the rhythm of speech or poetry, but very much allied to it. The measure employed by Berlioz to describe the gallop of the horses that are carrying Faust to hell re-echoes perfectly the sound of

QUADRUPEDANTE PUTREM SONITU QUATIT UNGULA CAMPUM.

French music or Latin verse – the effect is the same. Indeed, there is hardly an end to the definitions that could be suggested. Rhythm is life; the one is as difficult to define as the other.

The heart of man beats to a definite rhythm; when that rhythm stops life is extinct. If it is said that heart-beats are the concern of physicians rather than of musicians, one may point to the composer's device of speeding up the pace – or the 'rhythm' – when nearing the conclusion of his piece in order to increase excitement and make hearts beat faster. We walk to a definite rhythm; we breathe rhythmically, and music can be so timed as to aid the marcher. Oddly enough, the result is only partly achieved when a mass of men is in motion, since the sounds of a band at the head of a regiment reach the rear files later than the first ranks, and viewed from above a marching battalion moves like a wave.

The connection between the rhythm of poetry and of music is obvious. But there is also a less obvious kinship between the rhythm of music and the rhythm of prose. In *Pickwick Papers* Dickens described in two paragraphs Mr Pickwick's drive to Birmingham. They are getting near to the town: 'The straggling cottages by the road-side, the dingy hue of every object visible, the murky atmosphere, the paths of cinder and brick-dust, the deep-red glow of furnace fires in the distance, the volumes of dense smoke issuing heavily forth from high toppling chimneys, blackening and obscuring everything around; the glare of distant lights, the ponderous waggons which toiled along the road, laden with clashing rods of iron, or piled with heavy goods – all betokened their rapid approach to the great working town of Birmingham'.

'As they rattled through the narrow thoroughfares leading to the heart of the turmoil, the sights and sounds of earnest occupation struck more forcibly on the senses. The streets were thronged with working-people. The hum of labour resounded from every house, lights gleamed from the long casement windows in trembling walls. The fires, whose lurid sullen light had been visible for miles, blazed fiercely up, in the great works and factories of the town. The din of hammers, the rushing of steam, the deep heavy clanking

of engines, was the harsh music which arose from every quarter.'

Both paragraphs describe the same object, yet the second paragraph moves at a more rapid pace – as it should. While they are still some distance from the town the senses of the travellers are not fully awake and are only beginning to perceive the change in the landscape. They are more alert as they reach the town itself, pulsing to a quicker rhythm. Shorter words and quicker phrases are used by the writer. The 'murky atmosphere' changes into 'sights and sounds'; 'the ponderous waggons which toiled along' are replaced by 'the hum of labour'; the 'deep-red glow of furnace fires' by 'lurid sullen light'; instead of the 'dense smoke issuing heavily forth' we have 'the din of hammers, the rushing of steam'. The difference in the speed and sound of these phrases is clear. It is not to be thought that words were chosen deliberately for their sound any more than we can imagine a composer juggling with the notes of the scale to discover a new subject. These happy strokes, these inventions, are what distinguish the master craftsman, in music or in letters, from the plodding journeyman.

What is this quickening of the pulse, this acceleration, this heightening of interest but the device already noted of the composer turning with quicker steps to the conclusion of his symphonic movement? Or it may be likened to another device common in *Stretto* (i.e. 'tightening up') known as 'diminution' which, with its opposite, 'augmentation', takes place in the final, and most important, part of the fugue. In all life there is rhythm – ordered motion; music would be more remote from life if it had not rhythm at its very heart. Its influence radiates in every direction and embraces design as well as pace. Every bar has its strong and weak beats; every period its rises and falls, every movement its cyclic episodes. The laws which underlie the changes are as inevitable as the seasons – and as unpredictable; they are part of the composer's equipment, of

his genius. We can applaud, or analyse, after the event. We cannot foretell what will happen any more than we can teach a mediocre musician how to write a great symphony.

Comparison between the use made of some rhythmic elements by different composers is not altogether idle. It is, for instance, undeniable that composers of a certain race will rely on rhythm as pace, as a succession of clearly marked accents, more than composers of other lands. For instance, Russian composers rely on rhythm-accent for their effect more than on harmony or melody. Their genius for colour of a certain kind goes hand in hand with rhythm which it can stress and make more effective. This is no doubt somewhat primitive and to be traced to the dances of primitive peoples where there is but the beat of drums to guide dancers in their steps. The civilized Greeks – the Greeks of Socrates – preferred the melody of the flute: 'Marsyas, with instruments used to charm the souls of men by the power of his breath ... the melodies of Marsyas ... have a power which no other have; they alone possess the soul ... because they are divine'. They had been taught to appreciate it by their poets, whose words have both rhythm and melody. It is perhaps going too far to say that composers like Tschaikovsky and Dvořák are on the outskirts of civilization, as a critic declared, because they often rely for their effect on rhythm. No composer can disregard completely the effect of rhythm. We are all barbarians in some respects, and the constant repetition of a well-garnered rhythmic pattern produces the same effect on the sophisticated European audience that the insistent drum-beat has on the untutored African. But our rhythmic patterns can be more varied and complicated, more subtle and soothing as well as exciting.

In his use of rhythm the musician enjoys resources inaccessible to the poet, for he can, and generally does, combine two entirely different patterns. The obvious instance occurs when a design giving three or six notes to the bar is superimposed on a design giving two or four, both being heard simultaneously.

But, as a matter of fact, it seldom happens that of the two parts which make up the average musical score both conform to the same rhythmic pattern. It was said of Chopin's music that while the bass keeps strict time, the melody must be rendered with the utmost freedom. An excellent example of that is the *Berceuse*, in which the bass repeats throughout the same pattern while the melody is constantly changing design, having sometimes a lyrical character and sometimes turning to arabesque and flights of notes which, however, do not alter the mood of the composition and are perfectly relevant. That is as typical an example of rhythm inducing calm and serenity as the third movement of Tschaikovsky's *Pathetic Symphony* is of the rousing and exciting kind.

The rhythm of music is not the rhythm of the machine; it is never mathematically perfect, but is more valuable because of its elasticity. If you set the metronome ticking while a famous player is performing, it will soon become evident that his division of time is not that of the machine. Nor will his alterations correspond accurately to the alterations of other players. Stricter discipline is important in counterpoint where one part must fit exactly against another – Chopin's *Berceuse* represents the opposite – but as long as the notes of all the parts fall on the beat there is nothing to prevent a more liberal interpretation of time between beat and beat or between period and period. Like life, musical rhythm is constantly changing if by infinitely small degrees. Light, silvery at sunrise, is constantly changing before it becomes red at sunset. To measure the change is beyond human powers: it is equally impossible to classify and define the minute changes which can take place in the rhythm of a musical performance. So-called 'new rhythms' – syncopation, etc. – consist simply of making a feature of some of the coarser and most evident devices used by composers since time immemorial. It is not rhythm that is new but the use that is made of it. What is known as syncopated music impressed simple minds not because of its rhythmic novelty but because

it substituted bleating saxophones for strings and the legitimate members of the wood-wind family.

The great composer uses syncopation and rhythm often with overwhelming effect. One of the finest examples is in the last movement of Brahms's First Symphony, when the strength of the full orchestra falls on the second quaver of the first and third beats throughout six bars, and on the second crotchet of the seventh. Beethoven's C minor Symphony has a first movement built entirely on one rhythmic pattern. The so-called second subject can proceed for only two bars before being joined by the characteristic design of the first – a magnificent piece of musical architecture. The whole symphony abounds in rhythmical devices suggested not by deliberate intention but by instinct – the instinct for rhythm that is as much part of a great composer's equipment as the invention of melody and harmony.

A frequent device is the substitution of two notes for three in bars of the same length. In Elgar's overture *In the South* the change coincides with a modification in the nature of the melody, with the happiest effect. Not less telling is the shifting of accents from a strong to a weak beat, or breaking up a period of 3-4 bars into periods of 2-4 phrases. One of the most familiar examples of this design occurs in the last movement of Schumann's Piano Concerto, where the contrast between two-beat and three-beat phrases is so cunningly contrived as to puzzle sometimes the imperfect conductor almost as much as the 5-4 movement of the *Pathetic Symphony* puzzled and teased amateurs when it was first heard.

Since those days bars with uneven beats – 5-4, 7-4, etc. – have become quite common. Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, and many others have used the artifice with great skill and in a way that gives the impression of perfect naturalness. A 7-4 bar in Holst's *The Perfect Fool*, made up of two periods of 2-4 notes and one of 3-4, sounds to the listener as if the bar had three beats in which the last moved at a more leisurely pace.

In conducting it Holst's beat marked the first, third, and fifth notes only. All these uneven designs, however, are exceptional – in spite of the success of Tschaikovsky's 5-4 in the *Pathetic Symphony*. Used widely and without discrimination they lose all distinction:

When everybody's somebodee
Then no one's anybody.

One device too often repeated becomes monotonous. Changing accents from the usual first and third quavers in a period of two bars to first, fourth of the first bar and third of the second ($\overset{\cdot}{\text{I}}\text{I}\text{I}\overset{\cdot}{\text{I}}, \text{I}\overset{\cdot}{\text{I}}\text{I}$ instead of $\overset{\cdot}{\text{I}}\text{I}\overset{\cdot}{\text{I}}\text{I}, \overset{\cdot}{\text{I}}\text{I}\overset{\cdot}{\text{I}}\text{I}$) seemed interesting once; it is now as stale as the addition of the sixth note to the tonic chord, a trick now used by the bandmaster of every music-hall.

The common measures – 4-4, 3-4, and the like – provide a much safer basis, for they give us the means of measuring any change of speed and accent. The variety then is infinite. Compelled by dramatic exigency, rhythm in opera recitative becomes so subtle as to be indescribable and to defy definition. Then music has something of the brevity and rapidity of the spoken word. Yet in that, too, there is rhythm and the transition from almost complete freedom to order and measure is utilized by the composer who knows its use. Nor is recitative limited to opera. In concertos it provides at times a bridge between different movements or an introduction, and in the Ninth Symphony the whole introduction to the last movement is in the character of a recitative where Beethoven's additional direction 'but *in tempo*' is, unfortunately, too often disregarded.

GRIEG'S PIANO MUSIC

J. H. ELLIOT



A ROLL on the drum, an explosive A minor chord for full orchestra, a cascade from the solo pianist, and we are launched into one of the best-loved items in a popular category of music – in short, Grieg's Pianoforte Concerto. Perhaps that brilliant opening is a little misleading; it is as though an orator were to say, 'My theme is the Age of Chivalry and knights in shining armour', and then proceed to tell us about the flowers and fairies in his native woodlands. For all its rhetorical gestures, its heroic asides, and its outbursts of energy, the Concerto is essentially a lyrical work.

This is characteristic – and it is an ancient jibe that Grieg was a stay-at-home miniaturist who was apt to go lame before he had travelled far on an extended journey. We may as well admit at once that there is something in this view, but there need be no sneer. Let us rather say that, as a matter of ascertainable fact, the composer expressed himself most fully and perfectly in smaller forms. Most of us will continue to love the Concerto in spite of its defects, but we shall turn to the less ambitious pieces to find the essence of the exquisite art of Grieg. Moreover, the Concerto demands a pianist of no small technical accomplishment, to say nothing of the rarity of opportunities to perform the work under anything like appropriate conditions. The rest of Grieg's pianoforte music, on the other hand, is mostly within the power of a quite modest executant.

After the decline of Mendelssohn's popularity, Grieg was probably the most popular 'classic' in domestic and school-room circles. The height of this phase seems to have passed. Possibly Grieg's very accessibility has been debited against him,

and almost certainly it has helped to drive his name from the programmes of professional recitalists. Indéed, the profession – I do not mean pianists alone – grew a little blasé about him years ago, and was inclined to write down his music as mere provincialism, not brought 'into consonance with the forms and manners of a larger world', as one musician put it. Another complained that Grieg's unorthodox treatment of the leading note had 'filtered down into the slums of music' – though that was hardly Grieg's fault. The composer is, in short, rather cold-shouldered these days, and surely the time is ripe for revaluation. At any rate, it will do no harm to hold a brief resurvey of one of the most characteristic branches of his art.

The conception of Grieg as a composer who popularized a mere dialect may be dismissed at once. He made very little actual use of Nörwegian folk-music; nor were the mannerisms he derived from it more than superficial elements of his work. His real contributions to music were mainly personal, and it is the patriotic musician who expresses himself most completely who becomes the most perfect national spokesman. Grieg, apart from being a composer of high skill, was a Nörwegian through and through, and hence he created a national music. (Incidentally, we need not waste time on speculations about the influence of his Scottish ancestry. His great-grandfather was one of the Greigs – presumably a branch of the clan Macgregor – and emigrated after Culloden. In Norway, he transposed the vowels in his name to preserve something like the original pronunciation – 'i' before 'e' once o'er the sea, as it were. But all the evidence seems to suggest that Edvard Grieg inherited his gifts through his Nörwegian mother, who was herself an accomplished trained musician. Moreover, the quasi-Scottish devices in the music of Grieg are also common to Nörwegian folk-music, so that there is no need to seek a far-fetched explanation when a simpler one lies at hand.)

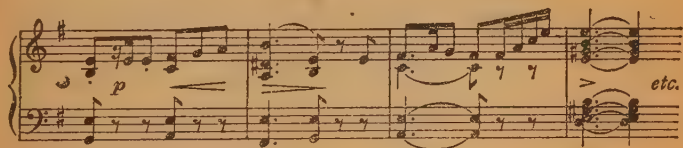
We have agreed that the composer was primarily a miniat-
urist. But he had undeniable genius, and the brilliant concen-

tration of his spiritual power upon small focal points was surely a great and inspired achievement. Again, it is, after all, a queer sort of criticism that reproaches the creator of a perfect doll's house because he did not build a cathedral. True, if he erects a church in the style of, or with the material suited to, the toy, or if he makes a large building with what is really a pile of smaller ones, we have legitimate ground for complaint – though we may still be enchanted, possibly in spite of ourselves. And so it is with Grieg.

It is significant, perhaps, that the strongest of all Grieg's piano works, the *Ballade* in G minor, Op. 24, should be cast as a set of variations. Instinctively, it would seem, the composer selected a mould into which he could pour searchingly expressive music, building up to a noble cumulative whole, without facing the necessity of a long, sustained flight. It was the most direct, the least mannered, thing that he wrote for the instrument. He had apparently no thought for its 'effect', but wrote with deep sincerity at a time of acute personal distress – 'with heart's blood in days of sadness and despair,' as he said himself. One does not exclaim, 'Ah, this is Grieg,' but, 'What splendid music!' The quiet, heartbreaking repetition of the folk-song theme at the end, after a passage of furious, despairing brilliance, is a stroke of the purest genius.

With the other large-scale piano work, the Sonata in E minor, Op. 7, one may more easily find fault. Without falling into the common error of measuring every such work by the yard-stick of classical sonata-form – which of course was only a particular solution, albeit a singularly perfect one, of a musical problem – we are bound to see that Grieg's structural method was not wholly convincing. Indeed, it appears to me that he made the blunder of flirting with formal practices for which he had no special liking or aptitude. The opening movement has well-defined themes (rather a multiplicity of them, in fact), and the recapitulation is followed by a coda ingeniously built up from the stated material. There is also development of sorts –

primarily founded on a shifting of part of the first theme into the bass. But this, so to say, is mere lip-service to sonata form: no strong impression of unity is achieved, delectable though each phase of the music may be in itself; and this applies to the sonata as a whole. The slow movement is frankly episodic, while the portentous Minuet is a little out of the picture – Germanic rather than Griegian. The finale, though less interesting thematically than the opening movement, has an inner verve that carries it through, and in the coda there is a finely sonorous ‘transformation’ of the chorale-like second theme, spiced with the characteristic rhythmic figure of the opening one. This is how the first theme of the finale begins:



And here is an example of the agreeable but naïve sort of sleight-of-hand that Grieg saw fit to employ in a ‘working-out’:



The music of the sonata is mostly charming; but it is imperfectly integrated, and Grieg was wrong, I think, to

lay himself open to the kind of analysis that he plainly invites.

Another work on an extended scale is the *Holberg Suite*, Op. 40, originally written for the pianoforte though nowadays, of course, best known in the composer's early transcription for string orchestra. This homage to the Norwegian dramatist, Ludvic Holberg (who lived in the Bach-Handel period) is perhaps the most delightful of the sporadic attempts to revive the eighteenth-century form of dance suite, which by Grieg's time had fallen into general disuse. The music loses nothing of freshness and piquancy by the deliberate affectation of an earlier musical style; the typical 'Griegisms' that emerge from time to time add to, rather than mar, the grace of the music. An occasional piece, no doubt – almost a *jeu d'esprit* – but certainly a delicious one.

I have called attention to the brave sonority of the final coda in the E minor Sonata. Beyond question it sounds impressive on the pianoforte, and we may as well note here that Grieg certainly knew how to exploit the characteristics of the instrument, from percussive brilliance to singing lyricism. Even the simplest pieces are sensitively pianistic. But a far more important feature is the harmonic originality of Grieg's music. Subsequent shocks to our ears have of course modified our reactions to its actual sound, but it is worth remembering that Grieg was a daring innovator who has wielded considerable influence. Gradually he evolved his own style of chromatic harmony. Bach, Mozart, and Wagner, he has told us, were his teachers, for 'each in his own way used chromatic progressions to express deep feeling'. Occasionally in Grieg one will come across an example – the posthumous *In the Swirl of the Dance*, for instance – that will cause even a modern pair of eyebrows to rise a little; and nearly always a very large factor in the appeal of the music is its special harmonic tang. Sometimes, indeed, this is its salvation. A pleasant pungency mitigates many a sentimentalism and often redeems the music from an excess of mannerism – over-use of cer-

tain personal rhythmic and melodic devices. Look, for instance, at the way in which a curious bitterness in the harmony staves off the hint of complacency in this extract from *Elegy*, Op. 38, No. 6:



And speaking of this *Elegy*, which is one of the large number of short Lyric Pieces, we come to what is perhaps the most completely fascinating part of Grieg's music for the piano – his miniatures. As a youth, the composer studied at Leipzig, where the Mendelssohn tradition was still powerful; but secretly he also admired Chopin and Schumann, who were at that time a little suspect. Grieg's small piano pieces have maybe neither the intimate poetic quality of Schumann's nor the graceful brilliance of Chopin's, nor quite the effortless command of the material shown in those of Mendelssohn. But comparisons are unnecessary as well as odious: let us be grateful for the enchanting personal quality of Grieg's *morceaux*. Debussy once said that a certain Grieg piece gave him the sensation of eating a 'pink sweet stuffed with snow' – which was at least more sensible than Hanslick's description of the Norwegian as a 'Mendelssohn sewn into a seal-skin'. Well, even pink *bon-bons* have their delights, though I daresay that the disrespectful 'M.

Croche' would have agreed that the comparison is by no means apt to many of Grieg's smaller items.

The composer was at first hesitant and derivative. There is a distinct Chopinesque quality in the *Poetic Tone-picture*, Op. 3, No. 4; and Schumann's hand was often on his shoulder during the production of other early efforts. But his close friendship with the young nationalist enthusiast, Rikard Nordraak (1842-66) – composer, incidentally, of the Norwegian national anthem – touched the appropriate spring, and Grieg became the spokesman of musical Norway – in other words, himself. The *Humoresques*, Op. 6, mark the emergence of his unique individual style.

Grieg's small piano works cover a considerable range, and, as we have seen, they are mostly within the scope of the average amateur pianist. There are frankly pictorial ones, such as the three folk-life scenes of Op. 19. The second is the famous *Norwegian Bridal Procession*, liberally scattered with the characteristic fifths; the picture is repainted in the ever-popular *Wedding-day at Trolldhaugen*, Op. 65, No. 6. Legendary subjects are not forgotten. The *Peer Gynt* trolls re-emerge in the *March of the Dwarfs*, Op. 54, No. 3, and the posthumous *Procession of Gnomes* – the latter a crescendo and diminuendo on one rhythmic figure. Then there are dances, melodies, album leaves, mood pictures, improvisations, song transcriptions, and so on and so on. Naturally there are weak pages, insipid pages, even unredeemably dull pages. But dip where one will there are gems to be found. It is a good moment, for instance, when one comes to such things as the *Berceuse*, Op. 38, No. 1, with its curious suggestion of turbulent currents under a limpid surface; or the justly famous Op. 43 pieces, with the peculiarly Griegish *Lonely Wanderer* and the passionate *Eroticon*; or the half-Tristanesque, half-impressionist *Nocturne* and the prophetic *Bell-chiming* in Op. 54; or many another deft crystallization of a mood or idea.

PERSONALITY CORNER

C. B. REES



MOST generalizations about personality are wrong. When you have met and been bored by the flamboyant individual you are apt to think that restraint and reticence are the only virtues. Until you meet a quiet fellow who is quiet because he has nothing to make a noise about or with. And then you encounter a Sabata who turns somersaults on the conductor's rostrum and also oozes personality. You encounter also a man who stands like a statue and also oozes personality.

RICHARD STRAUSS, for example. Between the two wars, when I first saw him conduct, I was amazed at how little he did that was visible to those in the audience. Using a small baton and a small beat, standing rigidly upright, his right arm seemed scarcely to move. His left arm would occasionally be raised slightly for expression and phrasing, and that would be all, thank you. But the performance ... ! His Mozart was beautifully proportioned, crystal-clear; His Strauss vibrant with life. An English conductor said to me after one such performance, 'He seems to mesmerize them'. Perhaps that was it.

But he looked no mesmerist. He was much more like a prosperous business man, tall, neat, precise. The face, healthy, striking in an impassive way, seldom mirrored what went on inside him. His pleasant, occasional smile mitigated the sarcasms of which he is capable. That face must have served him well in his recreation hours when card-playing! To interviewers he would be genial, but laconic. He hates fuss. It was impossible to imagine this man as the stormy petrel of music in the years of his rise to fame. He looked too calm, imperturbable, integrated.

When he visited London last season, at the age of 83, I saw him again. He looked little different. If anything he was even less demonstrative on the platform – if, indeed, that is possible. The left arm was now held as if clamped to his side. But the orchestral excitements he produced were still staggering. And there was always the impression of power in reserve. The term ‘old man’ had no relevance. Here was a great composer with complete command of his resources and of the players, a superb creative and interpretative artist. It was a moving experience to listen to him conducting one of his most famous and popular works, written nearly sixty years ago – *Till Eulenspiegel*. A man in whom the elements are so mixed and who never belonged to a clique could never be expected to take a ‘long-hair’ attitude to music. He often outraged sensibilities as well as ears, and when he first went to America he was attacked for conducting concerts at a big store. This was said to be unworthy of an artist. His characteristic answer was that perhaps the conditions in which these concerts were given were more favourable than those in ordinary concert-halls, and that it was better to earn money honestly than complain to those who do. He did not believe that composers benefited from starvation, or conductors either. He made a world reputation, of course, in both capacities.

He is a man who has lived life fully, and his art has been an enrichment to all of us. Think of *Till*, *Salome*, *Don Quixote*, *Rosenkavalier*, and of the raptures first acquaintance with them produced. What music it was – and is – that welled from this statuesque figure on the rostrum, a kind of German edition of Elgar in his conducting methods, in the military precision and economy of gesture, and in the apparent shy indifference to the exuberances of the audience and the blaze of public acclaim. I have never seen a more tranquil-looking rider of the storm, master of the whirlwind.

‘It is grand being back,’ said SOLOMON, early last year, after a long tour of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. But he

was regretful at missing the Test Matches, cricket being one of his constant enthusiasms. He always gives the impression that it is 'grand being back' when he comes on to the platform and takes his seat at the piano.

Short, thick-set, strong, with a fine, broad head and a pair of twinkling, luminous eyes, he makes you feel as soon as he begins to play that music is both serious and enjoyable. He goes inside it and revels in it, moving his head and body rhythmically as the concerto or sonata develops. I always imagine that it must be a helpful experience to a young pianist learning his job to see and hear Solomon play in order to find out (apart from anything else) how the music 'feels'.

You may disagree with Solomon's way of doing this or that work – and he himself is the least routinised of artists – but he never gives you a dull performance. He is never a bore, anywhere. In private he sparkles in conversation, has a fund of good stories, tells them with enjoyment, gets a crowd of hard-headed pressmen laughing in no time, and then, while drinks are being fetched, rattles off a brilliant piece with astonishing virtuosity. I remember being one of a party that met him just before he went off to the front in 1943 – to North Africa and Sicily – and we were all stimulated by his delight and eagerness at the opportunity to go to play to the troops. I believe the trip was his own idea. He was one of the first great pianists to do this. 'It is a privilege,' he said at the time. When he was asked about the quality of the pianos he was likely to encounter, he smiled and answered, 'Oh, well, if I can't have a good piano I will play on a dud, rather than that the boys should be deprived of their music'. I believe there were dud pianos; I also know that Solomon was more than capable of handling that kind of problem. He played at many ENSA concerts in this country during the war, and thus discovered, unforgettably, how hungry for good music the troops were. They were, he said, the best audiences he had ever had. Nor would he refrain from mixing good light pieces with the more serious music, ex-

cept that what amazed him most was that it was the best music that was always in greatest demand.

His is a wonderful career. Prodigy at 8, with a large repertoire before he was 12; temporary retirement at 15 for study; reappearance at 20, with the maturity of the true artist added to the phenomenal technical gifts of the boy. He has played with the greatest conductors and orchestras in the world, and remains to-day unspoilt by his success. He has achieved it always by purely musical means. He does not deal in spells and wizardries; does not court the limelight; does not play to the gallery. The audiences he gathers are themselves a tribute to his art. They want fine music, and they want it treated with dignity and sincerity.

Solomon also has the gift of making enjoyment infectious. You do not need to ask him if he is happy in his work. You are as sure of that as you are that you too are happy in his work.

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Another superb master of his instrument is PIERRE FOURNIER, the French 'cellist, whose appearances in this country since the war in public and on the air have stimulated new interest in 'cello playing. Fournier, with his grave, intelligent countenance, in which the dark eyes seem often to be brooding upon the problems of his art, brings to his music-making the unassailable integrity of the true artist – and a complete absence of any regard for flamboyant fashion or meretricious publicity.

Listeners will not readily forget those memorable series of broadcasts of all the Beethoven 'Cello Sonatas which he did with Solomon, for these events – outstanding in their musical significance – not only exemplified the Frenchman's mastery of his medium, but also proved that, contrary to what often happens, Solomon, a king among soloists, is also an irreproachable chamber-music player; and that he can, as only the finest artists are able to do, subordinate himself in a team when that team is dedicated to the finest propositions.

Fournier is only 42 years old, and after having taught at the Paris National Conservatoire, played all over Europe and America with the finest orchestras. His extensive repertoire covers all fields of music, and it is not surprising that composers like the French Poulenc and the Swiss Schoeck have dedicated concertos to him. His appearance in the B.B.C.'s Brahms-Schubert celebration concerts in September 1947 with Schnabel, Szigeti, and Primrose gave lovers of supreme chamber music a new and rare experience.

Although at a comparatively early age this thoughtful and sensitive musician has achieved real artistic as well as popular success, nothing is more difficult than to get him to talk about it. He will talk about music; he will talk about composers; he will talk about his instrument; and he will talk – with a light in his eyes – about audiences, not least English audiences, but about himself he will say nothing – except that there he is, a 'cellist, with a good 'cello, with an expanding repertoire, and with a perpetual desire to improve to-morrow on the not quite satisfactory performances (as he thinks) of yesterday. To meet this humble, exhilarating, gifted artist is to feel – as one does with Solomon – that there is an essential fitness, at best, between fine music and its most devoted interpreters.

BRAINS TRUST

JULIAN HERBAGE



Readers are invited to send in questions. Please mark envelopes 'Brains Trust'.

Q. Is a composer artistically justified in adding a modern accompaniment to a traditional air? (S.W., Manchester.)

A. To begin with, we can say with certainty that he is not *historically* justified, because practically all traditional airs were originally sung or played unaccompanied. But if we considered historical accuracy our only artistic aim, we would, for instance, always perform Shakespeare on an apron stage, without scenery, and with boys taking the women's parts. Such a performance is of real interest, and helps us to understand more clearly the real essence of Shakespearean drama. On the other hand, a performance of Shakespeare in modern dress shows us how little have men and their ideas fundamentally changed, and through this means, too, we get a deeper understanding of Shakespeare, as we realize how closely his plays mirror the fundamental problems of our own lives.

Music, like drama, has to be recreated at each fresh performance, and the problem of the creative interpreter is to make clear and intense the essence of the music by the simplest and most direct means. He may feel that some conventions associated with earlier performances have lost their meaning, and would only obscure the essential message of the music. He may even feel that something must be added to intensify the impact of the music on his hearers. To return to Shakespeare: scenery and stage lighting, if used with intelligent understanding, can intensify the impact of Shakespeare's plays. The composer who

adds an accompaniment to a folk-song is, in effect, adding scenery and stage lighting. His justification for so doing can be judged only by whether he enhances the effect of the original melody. If he distracts from it, as is only too often the case, then his accompaniment has little artistic justification. Beethoven, Haydn, and others were once commissioned to add accompaniments to traditional Scottish airs. The results, in several cases, were quite charming examples of Beethoven and Haydn; but judged to-day as folk-song arrangements they are, to put it kindly, little better than musical curiosities. In the case of many modern folk-song arrangements, one can safely prophesy that the arrangement will soon be forgotten, while the melody will linger on.

Q. Why is it that the most popular of the great composers have led the most solitary lives? (C.L., South Kensington.)

A. The questioner is, I should imagine, obviously thinking of Beethoven and Tschaikovsky, and the word 'solitary' here implies a certain revulsion from social contacts. Naturally all great artists require a certain amount of seclusion, to achieve the intense concentration needed for the lucid realization of an envisioned ideal. In art, as in other matters of life, the more one puts into a work, the more will ultimately come out of it. This, of course, is not meant to suggest that all composers work with equal facility. Schubert, with his instinctive, intuitive approach, wrote with a spontaneity that was denied the self-questioning, self-critical Beethoven. But even Schubert was forced to admit that those of his works 'which have been created by grief alone seem to please the world ...'. What Schubert did not seem to realize is that grief, of all emotions, lends itself most readily to the greatest intensity of expression.

Let us turn from the composer to his audience. Music is the point of contact between the creator and the apprehender. It is the language the composer uses to condense and crystallize the associations of thought, emotion, and feeling which lie deep in his subconscious spirit. The music itself is like the surface of a

mirror – the deeper the composer has delved, the farther will his thought travel by reflection into the soul of his hearer. And here I must make a further qualification. We all listen to music in different ways, though these ways can be summarized into the two alternative poles of ‘active’ and ‘passive’ listening. In general, the ‘active’ listener follows the pattern and logic of the notes, the ‘passive’ listener lets the music act directly on his senses, without regard to its construction. The great majority of listeners are predominantly ‘passive’. Instinctively they do not wish to remain near the clear surface of musical language, but to react responsively to those depths of emotion and feeling which were the composer’s original inspiration. Therefore the deeper a composer has plumbed the depths of his own soul – and this can be done only in solitary meditation – the deeper he will reach into the soul of his hearer. The thoughts expressed by the composer may be epic and universal, as in much of Beethoven, or neurotic and self-pitying, as in much of Tschai-kovsky, but each composer has put the same intense self-searching and self-criticism into his creations. ‘Art,’ wrote Tolstoy, ‘is the transmission of feeling the artist has experienced.’ Such feelings are experienced more intensely in individual solitude than in the midst of a community.

Q. Which, in your opinion, is likely to achieve a higher standard of orchestral playing – a permanent conductor, or a series of guest conductors? (B.C., Reading.)

A. I wouldn’t trouble to answer this question, had not present orchestral conditions, combined with the gullibility of the public (and critics), made it necessary to do so. An orchestra is simply a collection of individual units, like the eight fingers and two thumbs of a pianist’s hands. Even though these eight fingers and two thumbs have a mechanical connection (unlike orchestral players), a pianist spends much time making them function evenly and in synchronization. He also, incidentally, has to get his feet, and various muscles of his body, to perform their duties plastically and rhythmically at his command. The

result, satisfactory or otherwise, can be judged when he begins to play the piano. The conductor, equally, has to obtain a similar plasticity and rhythm from the individual components which compose his orchestra. If it takes a pianist many years to achieve a satisfactory result with his own limbs, it is obviously absurd to expect a conductor to perform a similar miracle in three (at most) rehearsals with the limbs of others.

Were not orchestral standards at the moment so depressingly low, we would realize that an orchestra cannot exist as a unit unless it has a permanent conductor. Impresarios and publicity agents fob us off with raptures about the stimulus of Herr X's 'interpretation'; but if we followed this to its logical conclusion, why not guest leaders, guest first horns, or guest triangle-players? The whole business of 'guests' is largely a bluff, the visitor being in the position of 'heads I win, tails you lose'. Public and critics may go into ecstasies, but as Ossip Gabrilowitsch once wisely remarked: 'You do not judge a general by a skirmish; sometimes not even by a battle. It is the result of a campaign that counts. The public forgets this'.

NEW BOOKS



Life of Richard Wagner, Vol. 4. Ernest Newman. Cassell. 30s.

MR NEWMAN's life of Wagner has been hailed as 'probably the greatest musical biography in the English language'. This is a just eulogy, if perhaps a rather misleading one. For Mr Newman's is not a 'musical biography' in the sense in which a great many works which pass under that label are. It does not combine – as Parry did, for example, in his great work on Bach – description of a composer's life with appraisal of his works, and build the two into a synthesis of 'man and artist'. It is 'musical biography' in the sense of being the biography of a musician, i.e. the history of a life. As such it is 'the greatest in the English language'.

It is comparable – wholly comparable – to Thayer's classic biography of Beethoven. Thayer did for Beethoven once and for all (he devoted his life to the task and died before he completed it) what Mr Newman now at last has done for Wagner: left an exhaustive *authentic* record and interpretation of his life and personality. As Thayer dispelled the mist of picturesque legend and fallacy, which surrounded the figure of Beethoven in the romantic early nineteenth century, so Mr Newman has set in order the vast pile of conflicting and tendentious Wagner literature which has accumulated in our time. As Thayer is the source of all Beethoven biography to-day – so that whether we read him or not it is his picture of Beethoven that we have stamped upon our minds – so future generations will owe their conception of Wagner to Mr Newman's monumental biography.

But they will read it as they will not read Thayer. Partly because the work – a 'heavy' specialist work for students if ever there was one, with every fact and issue pin-pointed down to the last detail – is leavened, as Thayer's is not, by delightful

irony and humour; partly because (and this is the main reason, of course) the subject-matter is so much more interesting. A biography of Beethoven interests us mainly in so far as it gratifies our desire to know what manner of man he was, how he lived and what happened to him. Mr Newman's book is absorbingly interesting quite apart from what we may feel for Wagner: it is a work of literature widening our knowledge of life. It is not only that the documents – the several volumes of Wagner's prose works, his autobiography, the mass of correspondence, journals, diaries, annals, etc. – are fuller and more revealing (no mysterious 'Immortal Beloved' here): their scope is so much broader. Beethoven, like most composers, passed his days within the (from the point of view of a student of life) narrow orbit of professional music-making: performing, composing, dealings with patrons, publishers, directors, fellow-musicians form the substance of his story. Whereas Wagner ranged far and wide in pursuit of his ideal. His life was a fantastic Odyssey which created an enormous stir, involving some of the finest minds and foremost personages of the day. It was a life such as Rousseau, Goethe, Byron, Tolstoy lived – a revelation of humanity in all its grandeur and baseness raising eternal issues, supremely representative and articulate.

In this final volume of his biography Mr Newman takes us through the climactic phase of Wagner's Odyssey, tells of his momentous decision to found a theatre at Bayreuth, of the gruelling campaign he waged all over Germany to finance its building, of the mighty preparations for the two festivals (*The Ring* in 1876, *Parsival* in 1882), of the festivals themselves and their aftermath. More clearly than any writer before him he brings out the tragedy behind the apparent triumph. That the money-raising campaign had been a failure; that it was not thanks to the German people, but to backing provided by Ludwig of Bavaria, that the festivals were made possible; that *The Ring* incurred a deficit which Wagner himself had to make good out of his own and Cosima's savings; that in the end he had

to sell out to the commercial opera-stage: these things meant the ruin of everything he had stood for. He had stood for a new world, nothing less: a world in which art (his own art, of course, but still art) would come into its own, would be acknowledged as a supreme social value. Since it proved this ideal to be a chimera, Bayreuth, although Wagner enjoyed there the greatest personal triumph the world of music had ever known, was a bitter disappointment.

Here we have the moral statue of the man, all his crying faults and follies notwithstanding. Here we have the context in which we must, if we are to judge him fairly, see his most damnable folly, his fanatical German racialism. Mr Newman points out that in 1865, when his cause was committed to Bavaria and the Munich Opera, Wagner had no use for the expanding state of Prussia. He clearly saw the new power for what it was: 'a military caste that is absolutely non-German and useless, imitated as it is from the warrior castes of purely conquering peoples and inapplicable to our conditions'. By 1870, however, he had disengaged himself from Munich. Prussia's victory over France and founding of a united Germany turned his head: he looked to a great revival of that 'Germanic Folk Spirit' which his art expressed: the new Empire would promote a new Germanic culture which, crowned by his art, would lead the world. But since the new Empire promoted nothing of the sort, Mr Newman finds him writing some years later: 'I have no more hope for that "German spirit" in which I placed my trust. ... I have had my experience, and – I am silent. I build no hope either on Pommern or on the Mark Brandenburg, or on any other province of this curious German Reich: I no longer build any hope even on the Margraviate of Bayreuth. I simply conclude a peace with the world, the first clause of which runs, "Leave me in quiet" '.

If, despite the mood of these words, Wagner did not keep silent, it was because he desperately needed some explanation for the apparent unregenerate materialism of Germany, some

alibi for her missing 'Folk Spirit'. Hence 'the sham-intellectual maunderings', as Mr Newman calls them, of his last years: German blood had been polluted by Jews and aliens, and not only that: like all Europeans, the Germans had become degenerate through having departed from their 'natural food' – the fruits of the earth – and taken to eating meat. And so forth.

Of course this failure of Bayreuth, which so afflicted Wagner, was a failure only in the light of his extravagant ideal. In a lesser sense – the only sense which matters now – it achieved its purpose. The theatre did not pay, but, in Mr Newman's words, 'nothing could alter the fact that (it) stood there on the hill a model and a challenge to future generations'. It pointed to a new art of opera, demanding greater imagination, skill, integrity, effort. A wiser man would have been content with that achievement. But then a wiser man might not have achieved it.

ROBERT L. JACOBS

Sibelius: a Symposium: Edited by Gerald Abraham. Lindsay Drummond. 10s. 6d.

To the ancient Greeks a symposium was merely an after-dinner drinking party, with music, dancers, or conversation. 'Merely' is probably the wrong adverb, for such conditions are propitious for the discussion of any serious subject. 'You'll have no scandal while you dine,' wrote Tennyson, 'but honest talk and wholesome wine.' And so, at a symposium, if the host is skilful, the conversation will be honest and forthright. We will learn, not so much from the wisdom of each guest, as from the combined wisdom of the assembly. Our host, Gerald Abraham, has chosen his guests with epicurean care. Many shades of opinion are represented. And so the figure of Sibelius grows clearer rather from their cumulative contributions than from their individual opinions.

There are many cases of healthy disagreement. Ralph W.

Wood dismisses the Seventh Symphony as 'weakest and most uneven of all his symphonies in its material' and 'obviously a failure to impose Sibelian unity and all-thoroughness on a single movement'. As a counter-blast, David Cherniavsky takes up the cudgels and speaks of 'the balanced symmetry, the monumental power, in fact, the timeless architecture of the whole conception'. This is good after-dinner talk, and each writer makes his point forcibly. Maybe it is a little confusing to the earnest searcher after truth, who expects his truths to be handed to him on a plate, but it encourages him to think for himself. Indeed, the chief merit of this symposium lies in the fact that it appears spontaneous rather than planned.

Ralph Hill begins with a portrait of Sibelius the man, displaying his usual power of apt quotation. But three and a half pages are scarcely sufficient for the full development of his theme. The portrait is hardly life-size, scarcely even a torso. Gerald Abraham continues with a dissection of the symphonies, lasting little over twenty pages. Would that it had been a vivisection, for the symphonic corpse sometimes decomposes instead of coming to life. 'No doubt', as Abraham remarks, 'the reader will not profit by matching his emotional impressions with a critic's,' but he may miss the living spark which makes the symphonies vital entities rather than absorbing structures. One wishes that the careful host had inadvertently allowed himself an extra glass of wine.

Ralph W. Wood, on the other hand, has allowed his tongue full rein, and is not afraid of controversy. He obviously feels the impact of a page of orchestral score, and does not hesitate to describe graphically his impressions. He is perfectly prepared to tread on anybody's toes, and the result is stimulating reading. He is generously allotted over fifty pages to discuss the miscellaneous orchestral and theatre music, and commands his reader's attention, if not necessarily his agreement, throughout. His article is welcome for its individual approach and its lack of reverence. *Finlandia*, for instance, 'exemplifies all one's

worst conceptions of what a very popular, hackneyed piece is likely to be'.

Scott Goddard is duly apologetic that he has to deal with such comparatively unimportant subjects as the chamber- and choral-music. Eric Blom, however, cleverly defends the slightness of his theme – the piano music. 'After all,' he jesuitically remarks, 'the pianoforte is not just an instrument intended to display nothing but itself and the music ideally suited to its peculiarities. It is an instrument not only in universal use, but of universal utility.' After reading those sentences, I decided to take Mr Blom's side in any future argument.

The songs of Sibelius have appropriately been given to Astra Desmond to discuss. She treats her subject with praiseworthy thoroughness, but perhaps too much from her own angle as an executant musician. Too often one reads that a song is 'useful as a contrast in a group'. But occasionally she produces pearls of wisdom. I particularly underlined the sentence: 'So in the Finnish settings we find that many repeated notes followed by a short falling phrase are a marked feature of the melodic line'. How many themes of Sibelius become immediately clear to us through this one sentence alone?

David Cherniavsky is given the last word, his subject being the special characteristics of Sibelius's style. His contribution is therefore of the greatest importance, though one would wish that he dealt more with character rather than characteristic, manner rather than mannerism. However, the broad view emerges, and we see Sibelius as the greatest of the modern classics. Why such an individualist should be a classic is the everlasting puzzle of music. But there can be no doubt that in his seven symphonies Sibelius has contributed to music's eternal heritage.

En Saga, *Tapiola*, and other symphonic poems have equally achieved immortality, but it is comforting to realize that we need not bother about the many works of Sibelius which we do not know. All contributors agree that these works are not worth

knowing. Beethoven could write his *Battle* symphony and Sibelius his *Karelia* suite. All great composers have written their pot-boilers, and Sibelius seems to have excelled in this direction. So a great deal of this Sibelius symposium may seem unprofitable reading, for so much space has been devoted to unimportant music. But does this not, perhaps, give us a clearer picture of Sibelius himself. He is completely unperturbed as to whether his music is significant or insignificant. The transcendent quality of his genius is natural, unconscious, and inevitable. He needs neither publicist for his masterpieces, nor apologist for his trivialities. This symposium reveals his greatness almost as much by implication as by direct statement.

JULIAN HERBAGE

Haydn: A Creative Life in Music. Karl Geiringer. Allen and Unwin. 21s.

Despite the great wealth of books on musical subjects that has been produced in England during the twentieth century, particularly the two decades between the two world wars, nothing of any substance has been devoted either to the life or to the music (or both) of Haydn. A translation of Brenet's slight study and Cuthbert Hadden's book for popular consumption in the *Master Musicians* series open and close the list.

At last a really substantial study of Haydn and his music has been published. I have little doubt that it will become the standard life in English. Indeed it 'is dedicated to England, the country that brought out the best in Haydn and that has been a source of encouragement and inspiration to foreign artists of all times'.

Dr Geiringer happily combines scholarship with a considerable literary gift. He has produced, therefore, a book which is eminently readable in its artfully contrived literary effects, and which at the same time is a valuable contribution to Haydn research and criticism. The biographical section is a first-class

piece of writing in its delineation of character and in its presentation of the events and the background of Haydn's life.

I am glad to see that Dr Geiringer will have nothing to do with Sir Henry Hadow's theory that Haydn was a typical Croatian composer. It will be remembered that Hadow (excellent educationist as he may have been) was little more than an amateur musicologist. Unfortunately, he sold to the credulous editor of Grove's *Dictionary* and to the *Oxford History of Music* (of which he was editor) the Croatian pup. Dr Geiringer points out that 'there has even been an attempt by the Slav philologist Dedaelus to claim a gipsy origin for Haydn. This induced Ernst Fritz Schmid to make elaborate genealogical researches, tracing the family names in German districts back to the Middle Ages and studying the lists of inhabitants in the respective villages. His final conclusions confirm what had been maintained before by French and German authors: that there can be no doubt that the Haydn and Koller families were of German origin'.

But blood and race alone do not determine one's nationality. By race Haydn was a German, by nationality an Austrian. 'He lived in a melting-pot of races, a country in which cultural elements from both Central and Eastern Europe were fused together. It was quite natural that he should be familiar with the way of life of the Croats and the Hungarians. He heard their music from his childhood and attended their festivities; he admired their artistic craftsmanship and the color of their holiday garb. With the instinct of genius he absorbed all these impressions and brought them to life in his music. The inner enrichment that he owed to his acquaintance with the different cultures of Austria and Hungary was more than a minor factor in making him the great artist he was.'

It is interesting to note that Tovey was also inclined to be rather credulous. For one thing, he accepted a *rediscovered* symphony which was printed in 1938 under his auspices, in the

name of Joseph Haydn, 'although an autograph score clearly proved that all movements but one were by the master's younger brother Michael'. For another, he accepted Volkmann's suggestion that the 'Cello Concerto was not by Haydn but by his pupil Anton Kraft. Both the internal and external evidence would seem to refute this suggestion.

There was no excuse for Hadow allowing his theory, based on the most amateur researches, to be imposed upon two such important reference books as *Grove's* and the *Oxford History* as a matter of fact rather than theory. There was every excuse for Tovey, who was let down by the so-called experts. In the chapter on his sources for the section devoted to the criticism of Haydn's music, Dr Geiringer shows the incredible difficulties and confusion that confront the serious student. 'The field of research on Haydn', he says, 'will remain dangerous and difficult ground as long as the several hundreds of spurious compositions have not been scientifically investigated. Only when this is done will a modern thematic catalogue of the master's compositions and a collected edition of his works be possible. The Second World War has destroyed any hope for a speedy solution of these problems'.

Mi Contra Fa: The Immoralisings of a Machiavellian Musician. Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji. The Porcupine Press. 21s. net.

Contingencies and Other Essays. Cecil Gray. Oxford University Press. 15s. net.

After Ernest Newman, two of the most vigorous writers on music are Kaikhosru Sorabji and Cecil Gray. Both were born in the year 1895: the former a 'Spanish Sicilian-Parsi' at Chelmsford, the latter a Scotsman at Edinburgh. Neither is the product of official musical education, which may account for their vigour. It is an indictment against the miserable lack of knowledge of and interest in musical matters in Fleet Street that these



‘HAMLET’—

THE MUSIC IS ADDED

The scene is Denham; Sir Laurence Olivier's monumental film 'Hamlet' is nearly complete; cameras, actors and actresses have done their work; William Walton has produced a score minutely timed to synchronize with mood and action: all that remains is to wed music and film and 'Hamlet' is ready. These pictures were taken during the eight-day recording session in the specially equipped music recording theatre — the finest in the country



William Walton discusses a point with Laurence Olivier. He also wrote the music for 'Target for Tonight', 'The First of the Few', and Olivier's 'Henry V'. On the left (showing the results of a riding accident) is Muir Mathieson, music director of two hundred British films

John Hollingsworth conducts the Philharmonia Orchestra while following the action on the screen





A general view of the sound-stage during the recording. The conductor stands before the orchestra; an illuminated indicator ticks away minutes and seconds. The large flats, which reflect light on themselves, are movable flats by which the acoustics are controlled.



...ces Hamlet and Ophelia on the screen; microphones hang from booms over
ector and technicians follow film and music. Overhead, and on the stage
the recording theatre may be changed at will





*The central control point on the sound-stage — in touch
with the projection room, recording and mixing engineers,
and with the musicians*

*the string section of the Philhar-
monia Orchestra — the leader is
Leonard Hirsch. The orchestra is split
into three sections for recording
(strings, woodwind, and brass), each
with its own microphone*



In the Monitor Room, E. A. Drake — in charge of the technical side of the recording — is joined by Muir Mathieson and Olivier. The window looks on to the sound-stage and to the left of the music control panel is a microphone connecting to a loudspeaker on the stage





*sound machine photographs the music as
a band of light and shade on film ...*

*... at the same time the music is also recorded
on discs, which allow an immediate play-back*





Music assistant Leo Quayle follows the composer's score, as the recorded music is played-back through the loudspeaker on the sound-stage



The music production manager spots something out of synchronization. This may mean altering the cutting of the film or else a slight change in the music



*One of the many problems that constantly cr
subject of a music-desk conference. On the*



during this highly skilled operation is the
Hollingsworth and Mathieson; on the right, Olivier



*Sir Laurence Olivier watches his own acting on the screen
as he hears, combined for the first time, the words of
Shakespeare and the music of William Walton*

two writers (and composers) were not years ago invited to be the critics of leading newspapers. There is little doubt that the deplorable state of our world of music to-day would never have been quite so low had newspaper music criticism been more independent and vigorous and far less cliquey and cissified than it has been during the last couple of decades.

Mr Sorabji uses knife and bludgeon with devastating effect, ripping and battering his way through the thick undergrowth of ignorance, prejudice, sham, politics, business, and the rest of the creepers and fungi which are stifling the healthy development and life of the British world of music. However, Mr Sorabji's hatred for critics may seem a little odd since he himself is one of the most vitriolic, spiteful, and uncompromising practitioners of the craft. Or is his hatred only for *certain* critics? If so, why doesn't he tell us their names? He surely isn't scared of what they might say in retaliation! Unfortunately he often weakens his case by hurling abuse against unnamed persons, whose identities are by no means obvious. In fact, Mr Sorabji is inclined to get a little hysterical and to lose control of himself, with the result that he over-exaggerates both his hates and his loves.

One of the most timely and important of his thirty varied essays is *Music and Muddleheadedness*, in which Mr Sorabji trounces a 'typical ineptitude' of the late Sir Walford Davies, the 'usual impertinent ignorance' of a Communist historian of music, and the 'moralistic' nonsense talked by Eric Fenby in his claim that Delius would have written greater music had he been a believer. It is significant, as Mr Sorabji shows, that there is no difference between Communist ideology and religious cant in their approach to music in terms of a (non-existent) 'morality'.

A breath of fresh air is let into the musty tombs of Prout and Stanford, whose hallowed names are still respected by pedants and true-blue musical gentlemen: the preposterous Ebenezer Prout, whose 'name is irrevocably associated for its lasting and

deserved damnation with a shelfful of text-books on the school-man's mechanics of music'; and Charles Villiers Stanford, whose work 'occasionally shows some small indication of a personality which is, however, soon smothered under a mountain of classroom lumber, used, it is said, in the course of *teaching* people to compose, to instruct his pupils to *compile* a sonata ...' The italics are mine!

Mr Sorabji also writes eloquently on French song, the music of Rachmaninov, Szymanowsky, Van Dieren, Chausson, and the arrangements of Godowsky, among many other subjects.

Cecil Gray's essays are quieter and less explosive – or at least they appear so after reading Mr Sorabji. Mr Gray is largely concerned with expressing his judgment on the music of Brahms, Liszt, Bellini, Meyerbeer; with introducing us to the unknown works of Antonio Caldara, and the fantastic and equally unknown works of Pietro Raimondi (who wrote three oratorios that can be performed separately or simultaneously, and a set of six fugues for four voices in different keys which combine together in a sextuple fugue in twenty-four parts).

However, in his opening essay *Contingencies*, Mr Gray covers a certain amount of the same ground that is explored by Mr Sorabji. It is a survey of our world of music, in which the philistine, the æsthete, the log-roller, the racketeer, certain types of 'freemasons', and the totalitarians (including the 'portentous, menacing, Brocken apparition of the British Broadcasting Corporation') receive the attention of Mr Gray's mordacious pen.

These two books are as refreshing as they are disturbing. They will be shunned and scorned by the smug and self-satisfied and the official-minded, but they will be read and pondered over with profit by the intelligent musician and music-lover, who is not scared by the more ugly aspects of truth and reality.

Pathways to Modern Music. Ian Parrott, Arthur Unwin.
3s. 6d. net.

You and the Orchestra. Ian Shaw Macphail. Macdonald and
Evans. 6s. net.

Handbook to Music. Charles Myers, L.R.A.M., L.G.S.M.
(Hons.), L.T.C.L., A.R.C.M. Littleburg & Co, Ltd, Worces-
ter. 15s. net.

I don't think there is anything more dull and exasperating than when the pedant tries to address himself to ordinary people and instruct them in his subject. Dr Parrott provides a perfect example in this booklet, which is 'designed to help the ordinary music-lover to bridge the gap which is thought to exist between the classics and the music of to-day'. It would be a very extraordinary music-lover who is able to understand the purport of Dr Parrott's booklet, for the greater part of it is far too technical and assumes the ability to read music and a knowledge of the basic principles of harmony and counterpoint. If, however, the miserable reader is unable to understand the meaning of the terms used in the text he is referred to a Glossary, which is far too loose and ambiguous in its explanations to do other than confuse him still further. Worse still, the text does not always tally with the Glossary. For example, what are we to make of the following: 'To many people a melody which is diatonic has an added attraction, if it is in neither the major nor the minor scale ...' If the reader not understanding the word 'diatonic' turns up the Glossary, he will find it explained as 'music written wholly in a set key (using the major or minor scale)'!

Dr Parrott is also a Master of Arts, as we might assume by the untranslated quotation from the Latin of Jean de Muris on the opening page of the Introduction to this pretentious essay in arid pedagogy.

Ian Shaw Macphail's book is the antithesis of Dr Parrott's: it is merely the superficial chatter of the ill-informed amateur critic, who wants to appear superior to the ordinary listener.

This booklet is full of ambiguous and inaccurate statements that render it valueless, if not positively harmful, to the untrained listener seeking information. Here are just a few corrections: (1) The twentieth-century orchestra does not regularly include five flutes, seven clarinets, two double bassoons, five trumpets, seven trombones, and thirteen violas. (2) The symphony did not develop solely from the suite. (3) Bach's fugues do not 'rarely proceed according to a fixed form'. (4) A symphonic poem does not necessarily attempt 'to convey the substance of a literary work and to say, in the language of music, what the writer is trying to say in words'. (5) Liszt did not write six symphonic poems. (6) It is ludicrous and confusing to compare a theme of a set of variations to a doorway, and the variations to different types of buildings – cathedral, cottage, skyscraper, castle, mosque, log-cabin, and palace. (7) Schumann did not write two Piano Concertos, 'one of which was scored for four solo horns in addition'. And so I could go on filling up the next page or so with examples of Mr Macphail's ill-digested knowledge.

Unfortunately, the book may be read and accepted on the strength of John Barbirolli's so-called 'overture' and Scott Goddard's so-called 'coda'. It is a pity these two eminent musicians, in lending their names to publicize and to sell the author's booklet, did not bother themselves to read the manuscript and clean up Mr Macphail's ineptitudes before publication.

Turning over casually the pages of Charles Myers's *Handbook* we read the following statements: 'Brahms and Liszt were great friends'; Brahms's 'symphonies began where Beethoven left off'; Tchaikovsky 'wrote his ballet *The Nut-cracker Suite*'; Wagner's music 'has never enjoyed the same [sic] popularity as that of composers such as Mendelssohn and Schubert. This is due to several reasons, the most important of which is that so little of Wagner's music is of value outside the opera itself. The Overtures, of course, can be, and are, played separately at orchestral concerts, but little else is to be found in concert pro-

grammes. Wagner also demands a large orchestra; for example, he asked for fifteen woodwind, twenty-one brass, six percussion, six harps, and sixty-four strings for a performance of his *Nibelung's Ring*, making a grand total of one hundred and six players, whereas the average symphony orchestra in England contains about seventy players. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that Wagner demands much smaller forces than Berlioz, and that his treatment of the orchestra is much more artistic than that of the latter composer.' Fauré's works include a 'Symphony in D minor'. César Franck's Symphony in D minor 'ranks with those of Beethoven and Brahms in importance'. Compound time 'is music written with two, three, or four main beats to each bar, each of which is divisible into three equal portions'. Simple time 'is music written with three or four main beats in each bar, each of which can be divided into two equal portions'. A symphonic poem 'may well be described as a Symphony with an underlying programme'. A chord is 'the sounding of two or more notes at the same time'.

I do not propose to continue with this melancholy list of inaccurate, naïve, misleading, ambiguous, and puerile statements, with which this book abounds. Mr Myers's childish pride in the acquisition of musical diplomas and his public display of musical ignorance and ill-digested knowledge would be a comical spectacle if it were not for the fact that his *Handbook to Music* was compiled for the use of 'listeners and students'.

RALPH HILL

Music for the Man who enjoys Hamlet. B. H. Haggin. Dobson, 8s. 6d. net.

Music in Education. W. J. Smith. Faber & Faber. 8s. 6d. net.

Both primarily concerned with musical education, these two books differ so widely in their treatment of the subject that one tends to give up all hope of finding common ground at all,

here, where there should be not only common ground, but common assent as to the best, the only way of teaching men to think in terms of music.

There is only one way of teaching arithmetic: deliberate attempts to by-pass multiplication tables would lead nowhere, and the teacher who refused to inculcate into his pupils these indispensable basic studies would not be much of a leader. Yet there seem to be dozens, perhaps hundreds of ways of teaching music, though at one time it was considered no less complicated, and no less simple a matter than arithmetic, with which it was grouped in the *quadrivium* of the mediæval university. Times have changed, and with them methods: in the process of change some degree of logic has been lost.

The unfortunate thing is that, at first glance, Mr Haggin's book seems to be imbued with a mathematical precision capable of outdoing Helmholtz himself. Not only are there formulæ and references (LE-7: 1. 11, BU-8: 1. 12, LO-7: 1.5) reading like a nightmare from a ration-book, there is even a ruler, given free with the book, so that we may fully appreciate the precision and industry of this remarkable essay. Its aim is to present music to the man who enjoys *Hamlet*; apparently, then, to a man of some culture and discernment, but one who (as Mr Haggin tells us) is prone to tear into shreds the programme he buys at a Schnabel recital. And as if to soothe this unenviable state of nerves, Mr Haggin begins his course of musical appreciation with the Sonata Op. 111 by Beethoven. Not the whole sonata – just the second movement. I beg your pardon – the first part of the second movement, from the beginning of record 3 to the point one and nine-sixteenth inches from the first groove. This is to be repeated 'at least once every evening for a couple of weeks'. Here follows a music quotation giving in full the passage concerned, and the presence of this quotation, and of hundreds of others, from orchestral, chamber-music, and piano scores seems to indicate that the man who enjoys *Hamlet* has no small acquaintance with musical theory, besides its

important satellites, harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration.

In other words, we have reached an educational impasse at the fourth page of the book. From there onwards the same mistakes are duplicated until we reach page 120, which sets out to provide material for further reading. 'The only writing worth your attention' (we learn) 'is that of the person who has listened to music with the capacity to hear what he has listened to.' This is either a clear case of *hysteron proteron*, or it is sheer nonsense: Mr Haggin's common sense should tell him that the good musician is the man who listens to what he hears. But what Mr Haggin hears are things unique in themselves – 'new shocks in sonority ending with a bang', 'pompous flourishes ... by the chortling bassoon', and 'the dizzying drop into the mock-mystery and dread of [5] (F-6: 2.8)'. Such a loathsome degree of obscurantism compels us to relegate this volume to the limbo of pseudo-musicology, a term recently coined by Dr P. H. Làng, of America, where Mr Haggin also happens to live. May I be forgiven for mentioning two such names in the same breath.

Mr Smith's book, which is 'the confession of faith of a teacher of music', by no means condemns the gramophone record as an aid or incentive to musical exploration. But whilst recognizing its usefulness he is aware of its drawbacks – 'instead of a clamour from the class to sing, or from your orchestra for an extra rehearsal, you will find they want to sit back and listen to Kreisler'. Mr Smith has some twenty years' experience behind him, as Director of Music at Alleyn's School, and throughout his book one feels not only the power of thought and loftiness of aim which have made possible the programmes he reproduces, but the strength of purpose which enabled him to attend to so many details of training and so many subtleties of technique, most of which are discussed in full, for the benefit of those who are willing to read and learn. Indeed, this emphasis upon the practical side of musical educa-

tion is one of the most attractive features of the book, which in one sense a history, in another a thesis, and in yet another a text-book for those teachers who desire to follow Mr Smith's good example.

He tells us of the good which can come of well-planned musical services in the School Chapel, and of the bad which can come when planning is non-existent, the boys being merely unwilling spectators. Without attempting to sum up in one chapter the gentle art of singing, he does give valuable hints which few choir-trainers can afford to ignore. Yet in spite of his obvious desire to make music at one with other subjects, and on an equal scholastic footing with them, he too wants to set rudiments aside, leaving them till the time when 'ignorance of them is felt to be a deterrent'. Will the child who insists on playing the piano or the violin by ear be allowed to continue to do so until he is deterred? Musical theory is infinitely more absorbing than multiplication tables; indeed it is rare in being one of the few basic studies which can be made interesting. But apart from this and one or two other personal fads, Mr Smith shows remarkable tolerance, even with regard to examinations some of which he wisely attempts to recast. His book is rich in constructive suggestions of this kind, and should be seriously considered by those who have power to act.

DENIS STEVENS

The Mirror of Music. A century of Musical Life in Britain as reflected in the pages of the 'Musical Times', 1844-1944.

Two volumes. Percy Scholes. Novello and the Oxford University Press. 52s. 6d.

This is a new kind of history, unofficial, gossipy, and enlightening. Could any other country have produced a book to match it? The ready answer is that the more musical a country is the more it will have to show in its Mirror, and that a hundred years of Vienna or Paris might yield a better crop of momentous

events, significant facts, statistics and records, anecdotes and oddities, than a hundred years of unmusical Britain, with half of that time falling within the most barren period. But a great deal depends upon the abundance and handiness of sources. From 1844 onwards Britain possessed a musical journal that might have been designed to serve as a quarry for the odds and ends of history. The *Musical Times*, of which the present writer can speak with incomplete detachment but exceptional knowledge, has always had space to spare for domestic matters, and its hundred annual volumes contain a chronicle of the country's musical life that is copious, sufficiently free from partialities to be taken as a guide, and human and friendly in the tone of its comment. Continental journals devoted to music (if a general impression can be relied upon) tend to occupy themselves more exclusively with high art or with commerce, and thus miss the middle stratum where history and humanity mingle, and where the material for a mirror-book is richest.

The task of extracting a bookful from this profusion of matter was taken up by Dr Percy Scholes. No doubt the first part was easy: it involved merely turning over some forty thousand pages and noting items of interest. But it was a specialist who then set to work to organize the mass of material, assemble it under chapter headings (thirty of them), put each chapter in order, and surround the whole with a readable text. No doubt some Teuton, given a similar task, would be similarly painstaking; but the Teuton mind would scarcely be capable of rising to Dr Scholes's lively manner of presentation. I do not assert that among its thousand pages the *Mirror of Music* does not contain a dull one; but I have read most of the book without finding it. Every page has something to interest, inform, entertain, or surprise the reader.

What kind of picture does the *Mirror* reveal? In the first place, one of abounding activity in a great variety of occupations and interests; activity not only in the big centres of population, but spread over the country from East Anglia to Wales,

from Devon to Yorkshire, from Aberdeen to Windsor Castle. Further impression: of the number of 'characters', vital, energetic, eccentric, or otherwise distinguished, thrown up by British music during the age of foreign invasion; of the eagerness to hear the best singing and the best solo-playing that the world had to offer; of the number of British artists who in spite of this rose to the front rank and stayed there; and of the long-sustained, ever-renewed zeal to become acquainted with the latest music from abroad. Yes, there were big exceptions to this, as we know after the event. But number is the index, for curiosity with regard to an unknown Hiller or Raff ranked equally with the thirst for an unknown Brahms or Dvořák. Another side of the picture, less flattering but undeniably concerned with keeping up the activity, is the vast, incredible number of large-scale works written by British composers and *performed*. One was aware that the times witnessed a remarkable industry, and mortality, in this line. But to read the list even for a mere ten years, is appalling. Dr Scholes gives the names of ninety-four oratorios and cantatas that were brought out in 1884-93. It is an epic tale, especially if you declaim the biblical and classical titles with due solemnity; at least these heroes went down fighting in a good cause.

Altogether the picture is a far more animated one than anyone would expect who had read only the official summaries. Much of this sense of life is due to the fact that the picture is largely a contemporary one. We read about events while they were happening, and we read the thoughts of participators who were as unconscious as we are to-day of future siftings. Victorian criticism, as it happens, comes through the test of comprehensive reproduction rather creditably, since the compiler is not particularly interested in picking out its bloomers.

During the early years, when the *Musical Times* was of little more than pamphlet size, its record of events was comparatively meagre. For the sake of keeping to a uniform scale of narrative Dr Scholes has drawn upon his own records of the time, and in

order to show the beginnings of certain events and movements he has gone back beyond the 1844 starting-point; moreover, in the general body of the book he has filled in many gaps and added many links. So the total result is far beyond the range of any scissors-and-paste operation.

Then there are the four-hundred-odd pictures that form the other half of Dr Scholes's personal contribution to the book. Most are portraits. Many of the others come from the illustrated journals of the age before photography was invented and give interesting and often amusing lights upon the manners and customs that held in the concert world. One now and then feels that there is more truth in an artist's pen than in a camera.

The book is one for browsing rather than for continuous study, unless you happen to be writing a history of the times. And if that history needs rewriting, the *Mirror of Music* will be largely responsible:

WILLIAM MCNAUGHT

Letters of Felix Mendelssohn. Edited by G. Selden-Goth.
Paul Elek. 16s. net.

The letters of Mendelssohn have apparently never been collected in a definitive edition, and such publications of them, mostly confined to those addressed to an individual correspondent, as have appeared are out of print. It was appropriate, therefore, that at the centenary of the composer's death something should be done to fill this gap in our libraries. Mendelssohn was a copious letter-writer, and poured out daily lengthy epistles to his family and his numerous friends. How he found time to do it all in the intervals of composition and concert-giving is a mystery; the habit must considerably have aggravated the ill-effects of overwork which led to his early death.

This book, then, contains only a selection of Mendelssohn's letters, and the editor confesses her inability to investigate at first hand the mass of material that exists, or did exist, in Germany. For there is some doubt whether the Mendelssohn

archives survived the stupid spite of the Nazis against the most Protestant of German composers since J. S. Bach. From internal evidence it seems probable that the book was compiled in America during the war. No use has been made even of sources which exist in England – for instance, the largely unpublished correspondence with the Horsley family. The text is mainly based upon older translations, which have been carefully revised by Mrs Saerchinger. They read well enough.

Even this abbreviated collection sufficiently reveals the remarkable personality of the writer and especially his unvarying charm, which so won the hearts of everyone he met that they were blinded to his weaknesses. On his charm, which overflowed into his music, was largely built that excessive reputation which survived him for a time and then reacted against the proper appreciation of his high merits as a composer. The remarkable thing is that there is hardly any difference in manner of expression – even as there is little change in his beautifully formed hand-writing and no great development beyond the accomplishment of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture – between the letters written during his visit to Goethe at the age of 12 and those of his mature years. This precocious development of his talents – in which may be included his remarkable gift for drawing delightfully displayed in the illustrations to this book – contrasts strongly with that of the other famous *Wunderkind*, Mozart, whose early letters are childish and who composed nothing comparable, in originality and perfection of finish, with the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture at the age of 17.

Apart from his lack of appreciation of the music of the Roman Church and (as might be expected) of sympathy with that of Meyerbeer and Berlioz, Mendelssohn's tastes and interests were liberal and wide-ranging. His devotion to Bach, whose reputation he re-established in Leipzig, and his admiration for Schubert are paramount. But he also writes interestingly and judiciously about composers, like Chopin, with whom

he felt himself to be at variance in many ways. As to his own views on the æsthetics of his art, it is a corrective to prejudice concerning his essentially pictorial imagination to read the following in answer to a correspondent who inquired into the meaning of some of the 'Songs without Words':

There is so much talk about music, and yet so little is said. For my part, I believe that words do not suffice for such a purpose, and if I found they did suffice I would finally have nothing more to do with music.

If one is inclined to criticize the editor for the rather scant measure she has given the musical specialist, and especially for the omission of the vivid descriptions of London society in the 1830s, the average reader will find here ample material for the appreciation of Mendelssohn's personality. And, perhaps, the average reader would find more of his letters just a trifle boring.

DYNELEY HUSSEY

FOREIGN PERIODICALS

From Santiago de Chile there has reached us the *Revista Musical Chilena*. This excellent periodical is now in its third year; the number before me is 20-21. Whoever is interested in musical æsthetics and its culture patterns will be glad to see this issue dated May-June 1947 and equally will regret that so many back numbers have been missed. For undoubtedly this is a periodical of the best kind, and the present number leaves one with a stimulating impression of Chile as a place where thought and research are active. It seems distant from us, and by the same token we must seem distant from them. But whereas they know European music intimately (there are notices here of concerts with Prokofiev, Walton, Schönberg, etc., in the programmes), we here must confess to very little acquaintance with their music; which is a loss to us and an adverse criticism of our present state of musical knowledge. With that last sentiment, though he might be too courteous to say so, Señor Vin-

cente Salas Viu, the author of an article in this number entitled 'The Public and Musical Composition', would agree. His article deals intelligently with the interaction of taste between the composer and the various types of public from the general to the specialized. The terms of reference are wide (responsibilities of the composer, position of the performer as guide or otherwise for public taste, music and capitalism), and there is to be a final article to bring the thesis to a conclusion. Of a more specialized nature is the article by Señor Carlos Vega on the construction of the Cueca of Chile. This is a well-documented discussion of the form of this famous dance, which has become a national feature of Chile and of the melodies to which it has given rise.

The number opens with an editorial on 'Political Fanaticism and Music', which puts bravely and succinctly the point of view of the saner type of musician with regard to the present-day tendency to connote politics and music. There appears to have been an attempt in Chile to ban Russian music for reasons of that questionable nature.

The new world is glanced at rather uneasily in the October (1947) number of *La Rassegna Musicale* (Rome), where will be found an acidulate notice of Walt Disney's *Fantasia* by Alfredo Parente. The war kept this film from Italy for six years. Judging by certain remarks in this article, there are some Italian musicians who would have been willing to suffer many more years of war if by so doing they could have escaped *Fantasia* for ever. The question of Vivaldi, his neglect and the intrinsic value of his music, is discussed in an article (final chapter of a book due to appear in Paris) by Marc Pincherle. Another useful article is that by Massimo Mila on the popular element (folk-music, national music) in Brahms's works.

SCOTT GODDARD

NEW MUSIC

ROBIN HULL



IT was at a moment of intense drama in *Delina Delaney* that the hero's mother, nearly beside herself with anger, 'reared her head as high as she reasonably could without pain'. What one wants to know, of course, is the precise degree of elevation, and whether the head could have been reared even higher with the aid of a local anæsthetic. But upon these matters Mrs Amanda Ros is silent. The concert-hall would have afforded her a wider field for study. There, to be sure, the amateur head-jerker is simply a pest to his neighbours, but the fervour of an expert can be enthralling. The opening of Debussy's String Quartet, for instance, has been known to produce head-jerks of almost incredible virtuosity from an elderly Doctor of Music. It was not merely that his head went like one o'clock, marking the rhythm with a violent emphasis that threatened to dislocate his neck, but that he rounded off this amazing *tour-de-force* by describing a complete semicircle with his beard. So supreme was his technique, so brilliant the blaze of inspiration, that his entire performance attained the level of creative genius. Yet even this triumph might be excelled if he had the pleasure of hearing the gloriously spirited music of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* in the admirable concert version arranged and edited by Julius Harrison (Boosey & Hawkes, 9s. 6d.).

This version is exceptionally welcome for various reasons. Though the opera has been produced in England with great success, it seems to have lapsed from the repertoire, and there is (at present) no immediate prospect of its revival. Nor is a revival to be encouraged unless the high standard of the original presentation here can be equalled or surpassed. There have, of

course, been a few instances of well-produced operas during recent years, both within and outside London, but the majority of productions would barely satisfy the ideals of a three-year-old child with water on the brain. If this fact has yet to be realized by the 'new public', it must be because they have become acclimatized to appalling singing, worse conducting, and a general style of presentation that seldom rises to the level of a parish-room charade. No wonder, then, that the concert version of *The Bartered Bride* offers a refreshing alternative to these perils. The editing is carried out with the first-rate musicianship to be expected from Julius Harrison. And he shows convincingly that the opera readily lends itself to an arrangement of this kind. He views his task from a thoroughly practical point of view, achieving justice to Smetana, yet keeping the needs and problems of the performers continually in mind. The solo parts (reduced to three) and chorus require, naturally, a really good standard of interpretation, but remain well within the scope of any experienced concert society. The orchestration is cued so that this version can be given satisfactorily even by those whose instrumental resources are fairly modest. Though the Overture is not included, its performance will obviously be undertaken where a fully equipped orchestra is available.

The music of Bernard Stevens has already made clear that he is a composer from whom much may be expected. His Violin Concerto, for instance, is in every way a notable work, not only for sheer accomplishment of expression, but for the rarer quality of genuine and potent individuality. The difficult task of setting John Donne's words is performed extraordinarily well in Stevens's *Three Songs* (O.U.P., 6s.). He maintains so close a sympathy with the poet that each song has the ring of inevitability. Perhaps he is most successful in *The Good-morrow*, where the fusion between words and music produces so impressive a feeling of unity, but *Sweetest love, I do not go and Go, and catch a falling star* both display a remarkable level of

excellence. The settings as a whole show a deep and unfailing instinct for beauty of line, and a strength of lyrical invention which is memorable. A natural sympathy with the poet is less apparent in Humphrey Searle's treatment of A. E. Housman in *Two Songs* (Joseph Williams, 3s.). This is not to imply that earlier and more famous settings of Housman ought to act as a barrier to later composers, or that they should be seized upon as a basis for unfair comparison. What seems to be missing from Searle's *March Past* and *The Stinging Nettle* is the real sense of affinity necessary to justify his choice of words. Thus, the music remains external to the poems instead of achieving a natural partnership. Apart from that, both songs are rich in musical interest, not least for their harmonic resource, and this makes one regret all the more keenly their lack of true coalescence with the spirit of Housman's text.

To-day brings queer news from Russia. Shostakovitch is in disgrace again! Nor is he alone in being condemned by the Central Committee of the Communist Party for 'anti-popular and anti-democratic tendencies'. It seems that Prokofiev, too, is the guilty author of an art which 'strongly smells of the modernistic bourgeois music of Britain and America'. The most curious point, perhaps, is that *British* composers should exercise abroad an influence far too often denied them in their own country. Meanwhile it remains to be seen what form an artist's reply to just criticism will take this time. The answer, in Shostakovitch's case, may even be another symphony, and one for whose performance two hours are barely sufficient. On the whole, it may be more comfortable for him to settle down as a Free English composer, except for the certainty that his most vigorous champions would lose all interest in his work. My newspaper report does not state whether the music of Kabalevsky is also under a cloud, but the sentiment of his Sonata No. 2 for piano solo (Anglo-Soviet Music Press, 7s. 6d.) is of a kind to excite fears for his safety. To be sure, the very pleasing festivity of his first movement seems unlikely to incur a charge

of undue intellectualism. Still, the *Andante sostenuto* (slow movement) shows a disinclination merely to skim the surface and the concluding *Presto assai* cuts even deeper in thought and manner of expression. Even if these qualities are unwelcome in Russia, they are fairly certain of a welcome here, and I cannot imagine that British pianists will be unwilling to pass over a work which is not only attractive in its material but consistently well written.

A volume which deserves close study by organists, and music-lovers generally, is the *Treasury of Early Organ Music* (Music Press Inc., \$3). In spite of its rather precious title, this collection gives a very interesting view of what was happening in musical by-paths (as they are now considered) from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The editor, E. Power Biggs, has drawn upon the resources of England, Italy, Germany, and France. On the whole, he has chosen well in his range from Dunstable to Daquin, and the music he presents can claim a good deal more than simply antiquarian interest. Couperin's *Fugue on the Kyrie* is but one of many short pieces whose beauty strikes one as impressive and deeply moving. The *Toccata in E minor* by Johann Pachelbel is remarkable for its content as well as features of effective display. And John Bull's *Variations on a Dutch Chorale* combine breadth and imagination to a fine degree. This is necessarily rather an arbitrary choice of examples from a volume which has much to offer, and which brings a healthy reminder that some of the most fascinating music in any period is to be found off the beaten track.

GRAMOPHONE COMMENTARY

RALPH HILL



ONE of the supreme efforts of Bach's genius was the *St Matthew Passion*, which was written for and first performed at St Thomas's Church, Leipzig. It is one of those rare masterpieces that are as perfect in conception as they are in realization. Its musical greatness and effect transcend all its religious implications, and therefore it is accepted by the agnostic or atheist as well as by the Catholic with the admiration, respect, and love that its power and beauty demand. Incredible as it may seem, we have been given two recordings of this mighty work – one by the Choir of St Thomas's Church, Leipzig, with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Gunther Ramin (H.M.V.), the other by the Bach Choir and the Jacques Orchestra under Reginald Jacques (Decca). It would be more accurate to speak of the Decca recording in the past and future tenses, because for some mysterious and what appears to be ridiculous reason only seven records (*not* in numerical sequence) have been issued so far. The remainder are to follow in dribblets and at varying intervals, which is a most unsatisfactory method of distribution. Dr Jacques's performances of *St Matthew Passion* are well known and admired in London, and judging by the recorded dribblets to hand he maintains his usual high standard. As one might expect, the English recording is superior to the German recording, which was made at Leipzig during the war. Nevertheless, the latter is very good and the performance is extremely fine. In view of the great Bach tradition at St Thomas's Church that goes back to Bach's own days there as Cantor,

special interest and authenticity are attached to this recording.

Bach's music was generally neglected for about a hundred years after his death. Then along came Mendelssohn, who revived the *St Matthew Passion* at St Thomas's and other of Bach's major works and by doing this established Bach as one of the supreme masters of music. In his own day Mendelssohn was considered to be a supreme master – the equal of Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. To-day his reputation has suffered considerably, and except for a handful of works he is as neglected as Bach was a century or more ago.

A century has passed since Mendelssohn's death, but no one is now prepared to come forward and acclaim him a neglected master. Despite the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Violin Concerto, and one or two other things, posterity fairly places him as one of the lesser masters. But that is no reason why certain of his better major works should be neglected. For example, there is the *Reformation Symphony*, which is given a splendid performance by the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra under Charles Münch (Decca). In this curious piece of propaganda for the Protestant Church use is made of the so-called 'Dresden Amen' as a symbol of Roman Catholicism, and the Lutheran chorale *Ein feste Burg* as a symbol of Protestantism. The latter finally dominates the musical scene with great dignity and majesty! The *Scotch Symphony*, with its mood-pictures of romantic Scottish scenery, is also worthy of being heard occasionally in our concert programmes, as the recording by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent (Col.) reminds us. The Piano Concerto No. 1 in G minor, which is slickly and sentimentally played by Eileen Joyce with the London Symphony Orchestra (Decca), may not be a great concerto, but it is an attractive period-piece. The first movement has a bold first subject and a pleasing *cantabile* second subject that on its initial appearance is made somewhat ridiculous by the vamping bass accompaniment. The slow

movement is pure *cantabile* throughout in Mendelssohn's best Victorian pink party manner. The *finale*, however, wants a bit of swallowing: it ought to have been entitled *A Day at the Races*. The deliciously light-footed *Scherzo* and the lovely *Nocturne* from the music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are played very beautifully by the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Van Beinum (Decca).

For fecundity of invention and mastery of orchestral effect Benjamin Britten reminds one of Mendelssohn, particularly in his mood-pictures of the sea. Britten's Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes* are brilliant, subtle, evocative music, which exploits new and original orchestral sonorities. I welcome two excellent recordings of these interludes played by the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Van Beinum (Decca) and the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent (Col.). There is little to choose between the two after taking every point into consideration, but the fact that Decca has thrown in the magnificent *Passacaglia* as well as the Interludes brings the scales down heavily on the side of this recording. A recording under the auspices of the British Council of excerpts from Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (H.M.V.) is more than welcome, particularly as the performance, under Reginald Goodall, is by the excellent cast which gave this vital work its first performance at Glyndebourne.

I think it is no exaggeration to say that not since the new and startling orchestral sonorities of Strauss, Debussy, Schönberg (his Five Orchestral Pieces particularly), Stravinsky, and Sibelius has there appeared such an outstandingly individual master of the orchestra as Britten. Those of us whose memories can go back to the first decade of the present century will remember the extraordinarily novel and vivid impact of Strauss's tone poems. Time has shown that not all of the actual music of Strauss's tone poems is of first-rate quality, but there can be no question about the quality of the orchestral treatment. Nevertheless, *Till Eulenspiegel* remains a masterpiece in every res-

pect, and the beautifully balanced and clearly detailed performance of the Milan La Scala Orchestra under Clemens Krauss (Decca) helps to make this an obvious fact. There is still much that remains admirable about *Ein Heldenleben*, which is given a notable performance by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Thomas Beecham (H.M.V.).

Strauss to-day and Strauss fifty years ago are almost two entirely different personalities, judging by some of his latest instrumental works that we have heard since the Second World War. In his Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra, for instance, Strauss reverts to the classical purity of his very earliest style before he embarked on his symphonic poems. If I were Léon Goossens, who gives a superb performance of the Concerto with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Alceo Galliera (Col.), I should revel in the charming and delightful writing for the oboe, which is supported by a delicately wrought accompaniment. But as I am merely a critic having heard it twice, I want to pass on to something else.

I shall certainly not waste much time on Stravinsky's arid and ugly *Symphony in Three Movements*, which is played by the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra under the little man himself (Col.). Stravinsky's self-imposed austerity music shows up badly beside the glowing colour and exuberance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Spanish Caprice*, which is given a dazzling performance by the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra under Malko (H.M.V.). I am also glad to possess Debussy's youthful and charming *Printemps*, which is delicately handled by Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (H.M.V.), and Wagner's *A Faust Overture*, of which the N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra under Toscanini (H.M.V.) give a thrilling performance; but the American recording gives off too much surface noise.

Somebody told me that one of my colleagues recently dismissed Heifetz as a mere 'manipulator of the violin'. This shows that my colleague must be either insensitive to the finer points

of violin playing or prejudiced in some personal way. No one with any critical acumen would deny the superb beauty and power of Heifetz's performance of Vieuxtemps's Violin Concerto No. 5 in A minor with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent (H.M.V.). This is indeed great playing, which breathes life and colour into music that had become somewhat jaded and faded. Ysaye placed Vieuxtemps among the masters. Indeed Vieuxtemps was a master – a master in 'manipulating' supremely effective music for the violin.

Recent issues of chamber music have been outstanding in quality. The Griller String Quartet gives us an inimitable performance of Haydn's Quartet Op. 33 No. 3 (Decca). This is an astonishingly mature and expressive work for Haydn's Op. 33, and the playing of the Grillers reveals every detail of the music with perfect understanding of its subtleties of rhythm and *ensemble*. Haydn's Quartet Op. 64 No. 5, known as *The Lark*, is given a powerful, energetic, and beautifully proportioned performance by the Hungarian String Quartet (H.M.V.).

The Griller String Quartet also play Mozart's Quartet in D minor, K.421 (Decca), which is one of those consummative works that place the achievements of Mozart on the very highest plane. No less perfect in workmanship and expressive in its pure musical beauty is Mozart's String Quintet in D, K.593 (Col.), which the Budapest String Quartet with Milton Katims as the second viola play very finely.

Ravel's Trio for Piano, Violin, and 'Cello is one of the masterpieces of twentieth-century chamber music, and it solves most, if not all, the problems of *ensemble* that inevitably present themselves when strings are combined with piano. Ravel's purity of style and delicate romantic sentiment are charmingly displayed in this work, and the *Trio di Trieste* (H.M.V.) secures a colourful performance.

MUSIC OF THE FILM

SCOTT GODDARD



THE one really considerable event in film music during January was Constant Lambert's score for *Anna Karenina*. Much had been expected of this, and with reason. The subject offered immense possibilities for the director of the film and so by implication for the composer of the music. The composer in question was known to be a musician of resource and great ability. There were those who for many years had regretted that so much of his time had been taken by executant's work instead of being given to the infinitely more exacting and rare work of creation. But now, we said, Lambert has left Covent Garden and our loss there will surely be our gain in other places, that is to say, in *Anna Karenina*.

I went three times to this film within the space of a week, probably a record in the annals of my film going since the days of *Beau Geste* which had, as will be remembered (if anybody to-day dare own to remembering that masterpiece of emotional understatement), music by or rather from Bizet. The first visit to *Anna Karenina* was nothing but acid disillusionment. But then, I had approached the film as an onlooker and not as a listener; the eye had usurped the rights of the ear. The second visit, when I forced myself to listen to the music, was more heartening, though I came away from that attempt hardly less clear in my mind as to the value of the music or rather its quality. All of which goes to show the danger of a preconception. For I had made up my mind that Lambert's music to this film was going to sweep the board; the only danger would be that it would swamp the film. I had forgotten that a film, however good, can annul the work of the finest musi-

cian, and so I was unprepared for a production in which the music seemed to count for so little that one forgot it almost as soon as one left the cinema and only remembered the indescribable fashion by which Tolstoy's story had been manipulated in the interests of the Art of the Film. It took a third visit to discover the real character and essential quality of Lambert's music. I don't think that the music will for long be remembered. The odds, the film odds, are too strong for it, seeing that in itself it is subtle and delicate art. Seeing also that what surrounds it is so much less subtle or delicate and so much more instant in its appeal to the public, who will go to see Vivien Leigh and the astonishing performance of Sir Ralph Richardson.

At that third hearing I began to try to face the problem of deciding what was and what was not Constant Lambert. Glinka, I said to myself during the scene in the ballroom, and was thankful to have this confirmed by one who knew (not Mr Tom Driberg, M.P., who, I was relieved to find, had also discovered this fact for himself). But the absence of any music which one could, as it were, put one's finger on and say 'that is by Lambert' was intriguing and extraordinarily puzzling. He would be a foolhardy man who would vouch for having disentangled Glinka from Lambert, the quotations from the original text. In this film the two are as close as some composers' English folk-music is close to their own type of utterance.

This is a bare score. The texture of the music is mainly transparent, a fact that will not surprise anyone who knows Lambert's work. And there are a number of excellent and effective silences which, though they may not have been actually scored by Mr Lambert, are none the less effective and bring his music into relief. And if I say that no one will remember this music, that is partly because no one in his senses will want to remember the film it so excellently and, alas! so adequately accompanies, and because it has either been given or has taken too little opportunity.

Brighton Rock had its silences too. Here the music did its

menial task well and left, as a well-trained servant does, no impression whatsoever of having ever taken part in the business. But the silences were golden, and although the director, if it were he, cannot be congratulated on having agreed to such soulless efficiency, he may be felicitated on having arranged some effective holes in the score.

Ben Frankel's music for *Mine Own Executioner* had the same efficiency as Mr May's music to the above-mentioned film, with the added virtues of style and apposite intelligence. Nothing here seemed misplaced, nothing took attention from the film in the way the irruption of the *Hebrides* Overture did in *Brighton Rock* (Pinky and Rose on the pier, the sound of a concert, then his petulant 'Let's go and hear some real music or some such words, an interesting use of a classic, but why precisely the *Hebrides*?). Frankel's music served the film with consistent tact, always effective, technically impeccable, excellent in craftsmanship. It has, in fact, all the virtues that were lacking on the other side of Leicester Square, where Disney's *Fun and Fancy Free* lay in wait for the unwary. Here the music counted for nothing. It sounded, in its goggle-eyed sentimentality, as old-fashioned as a prop from some Hollywood period-piece. It welled up and sank down, advanced and (thank heaven) sometimes retreated at the bidding of the producer or the director or whoever it might have been that filled the track with sound. In *Fantasia* Disney had his will of the music of Bach and Beethoven. In this later venture among masterpieces the music seems to have been not taken from earlier sources but to have been made to order. The order has been executed; so has the music, which has neither head nor tail, neither rhyme nor reason.

MUSIC OVER THE AIR

DENIS STEVENS



By far the most remarkable broadcast in recent months, for me at any rate, was a Promenade Concert. It was an ordinary Promenade programme, perhaps even a little more than ordinary, since a Mozart Piano Concerto was played, and played well. But it was neither the music nor the interpretation of it which so captivated me on this particular occasion: it was the transmission, purely and simply. Perhaps the most striking feature of frequency modulation, still in the experimental stages in this country, is its purity. There seems to be little or no barrier between performer and listener, and the evenly balanced, suave tone contributes quite considerably to the appreciation of a really first-rate performance. If ever this system of transmission becomes an accepted thing in England, we may well have to re-adjust our critical standards where radio performances are concerned. And would it be out of place to remind the musicians that their faults, as well as their virtues, are being magnified?

But there are problems enough in the normal method of transmission, though none so great perhaps as those which beset the men responsible for relaying opera. It is gratifying to find that the outlook of the B.B.C. is broad, and occasionally even exotic, so that studio versions, relays from opera-houses in London, and relays from the Continent often rub shoulders, giving the listener ample opportunity to compare our attitude and that of the listener abroad. Of the studio operas, the most noteworthy was the revival of Cherubini's *Les Deux Journées*, which was entrusted to Sir Thomas Beecham and a varied cast, some of whom were a little unhappy in their French pronunci-

ation. The spoken dialogue, of course, showed this up far more than the singing, which by its spirited nature suggested that the cast had quite succumbed to the charm of this melodious score. Revival, too, was the key-note of the programmes of early Italian opera, directed by Vergilio Mortari, who had with him his own group of soloists of rather varying calibre. Although one of them tended to over-shoot the mark in Monteverdi's *Combat of Tancredi and Clorinda*, the main impression was that the whole group wished to make their performance realistic and expressive; a most marked contrast to the pathological methods of certain promoters of ancient music.

From France we had a piquant evening of Ravel, whose two act operas, *L'Heure Espagnole* and *L'Enfant et les Sortilège* were broadcast on the tenth anniversary of the composer's death, while from Italy we heard Verdi's *Otello*, which marked the opening night of La Scala, Milan. Covent Garden contributed a fine performance of *Peter Grimes*, and Sadler's Wells an amusing one of *The School for Fathers*, which takes kindly to the medium of radio.

The Berlioz *Grande Messe des Morts* takes less kindly, but a large-scale venture is always to be applauded provided that was the composer's original intention. Of like stature was Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand*, which concluded the brave series of Mahler Symphonies. It would be interesting to know roughly how many converts were made, and whether a Bruckner series is also contemplated. With Furtwängler in England, this should not be impossible, and we could at least be sure of a convincing interpretation.

The Third Programme, naturally, is responsible for offering us the largest number of suspect dishes, and if this is a reaction against some who complain of a musical diet almost as unvaried as our weekly food-ration, the reaction is a good sign. But isolated performances of little-known works will not establish for them a place in the normal concert repertoire, and those

a charge of programme policy would do well to bear in mind the great difficulty of acquiring particular tastes.

Certain healthy features are noticeable, however, in the desire to link up works which have something in common. It may be two works with the same title, but written by two different composers, or it may be two compositions of the same type by the same composer, but separated either chronologically or stylistically. It was instructive, therefore, to hear the Violin Concerto and the Piano Concerto of Busoni within a week or so of one another, especially since neither has been heard on the air since pre-war days. Equally interesting, and revealing from the historian's point of view, was the broadcasting of Christmas Oratorios by Schütz and Bach during the same week. Unfortunately, in neither case was the standard of performance particularly high, though the unique opportunity for comparing the two settings perhaps made up for that. Did Schütz say more in his forty-five-minute work than Bach did in those six staggering cantatas?

Later broadcasts of separate cantatas have been more successful, notably those performed by Anthony Bernard in one of the London churches. There is no doubt that environment does help very much when it is a question of creating an atmosphere which can be sensed by those listening in. And there is great wisdom in choosing only the best of the cantatas, and avoiding the dangerous temptation to make a series of them. After all, if there must be a series, why not broadcast the whole of the *Bachgesellschaft*, starting from *Jahrgang 1*? But no – we believe that moderation tempers even the most enthusiastic members of the B.B.C. music staff.

Although there has been a fair sprinkling of artists from abroad, they have been mainly singers and players, conductors being distinctly in the minority. When Hermann Scherchen took the B.B.C. Orchestra in hand, however, he managed to coax them into a more careful way of playing, and gave us two or three very enjoyable concerts. The same can be said of Manuel

Rosenthal, who directed four concerts of French music, in which the Philharmonia Orchestra and several soloists were featured.

Radio has always been a fine medium for musical education. In no other institution can the lecturer be so carefree in his choice of recorded examples, all faded up and down at just the right moment by skilled and knowledgeable technicians. But live illustrations are better still, and it is these which are helping to popularize series of programmes like *The History of Music in Sound*, or (on the Light Programme) *The Plain Man's Guide to Music*. Both are educational, and though they cater for completely different types of listener, and deal with music which so far is centuries apart, the common aim is to help people to understand better the music that they tend to hear instead of listen to. It was a bold step to plunge even the Third Programme clientele into Troubadour Songs and Byzantine Chant, rather like throwing someone in the deep end of a swimming-pool in order to teach him to float. There was little or no attempt to create a Gallic or Constantinopolitan atmosphere in those early programmes, but the music itself was sung admirably.

OPERA IN LONDON

STEPHEN WILLIAMS



WAGNER came sweeping back to Covent Garden like an incoming tide. With *The Mastersingers* we were in the shallows, a little doubtful, a little questioning. Was this really the ocean or only an inland water? But when *Tristan and Isolde* came on the scene, there were no doubts or questions at all. 'The chidden billow seemed to pelt the clouds.' In other words, it was well up, and over the promenade!

Leaving these maritime similes and speaking as a mere land-lubber, I will say that this was emphatically the richest and most splendidly satisfying evening of opera since before the war. Once again we winced and quivered in the grip of the old ecstasy: the Prelude, with its agonized modulations that wound as poignantly as red-hot pincers piercing into the flesh; the second act: not so much the central duet – that we take more or less for granted, as we take for granted the lustre of the stars – but the hundred other little sparks and flashes of genius: the opening pages where the music dances and trembles on the tiptoe of expectancy, the restless figures darting into being like the pin-points of light from fireflies in the scented darkness; the still desolation of the scene in Brittany, when time seems to stop with the stopping of Tristan's heart. Once again we marvelled at the magical unity of thought and feeling from the first chord of the Prelude to the last chord but three of the *Liebestod*; and once again we watched, with a kind of awe, those in the audience who were suffering this fiery ordeal for the first time in their lives.

But let us cut away such rhapsodical rigging and follow the course of Tristan's ship like practical navigators. First of all,

there was one important change. We are so used to calling the opera *Tristan* that nine times out of ten Isolda's name is not mentioned at all. But this time it was not 'Tristan': it was definitely 'Isolda'. One might even have caught oneself calling it 'Kirsten'. For it was definitely Flagstad's evening, Flagstad's opera. The word 'burnish' inevitably leaps into the mind. It leaped into several minds and got into several newspapers. Well, I can't help it. It's a good word, and a good word is always worth repeating, as 'Q' proved when he reminded his students that the Bible said 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's', not 'Render unto Cæsar the things that appertain to that potentate'. Nay, more, it is the only word: the only word to describe that noonday splendour, that bountiful golden glow that shone in her voice throughout the evening. It was a mature Isolda, but that seems to me unquestionably right. This is no boy-and-girl romance, but the tragedy of a man and woman who bring substantial bone and muscle to feed the fire that slowly devours them. The heroine who meets both love and death on equal terms and salutes them with such majestic utterance is not a child: she is every inch 'Isolda, Princess of Ireland'.

August Seider is a sincere and accomplished singer. He has also a knightly figure. But – he was not *quite* Tristan, particularly in the earlier scenes. His voice seemed to lack colour and ring and his acting did not rise to the passion and abandonment urged by the music. In the last act, however, he got more into his stride – if I may use that simile of a desperately wounded man lying on his back – and his singing at length achieved dramatic conviction.

Everyone seemed surprised that King Mark 'came over' as well as he did. It has always been an axiom that King Mark is a tedious old bore. 'When King Mark clears his throat preparatory to telling the story of his life ...' yes, we have often read it and there is no need to go on. I don't regard King Mark as an old bore at all. I think his music at the end of Act II is very

‘THE MASTERSINGERS’ at Covent Garden

Wagner used to rival Bach and Beethoven in popularity. During the Second World War, although Wagner had been dead over half-a-century his music was more or less unofficially banned, presumably for patriotic reasons. Covent Garden has now added to its repertoire Wagner's ‘The Valkyries’, ‘Tristan and Isolde’, and ‘The Mastersingers’. It will be interesting to see what effect Wagner's music will have on the new opera audiences, who have little or no experience of the German master's grand romantic style



Hans Hotter as Sachs



*Constance Shacklock as
Maddelene*



*Grahame Clifford as
Beckmesser*



Sachs and Eva (Victoria Sladen)



The riot scene at the



d of the second act



Walther (Frank Sch...)



sings the Prize Song



Beckmesser proclaims that Sachs is the comp



the song the people have just derided



*PIERRE FOURNIER, distinguished French 'cellist, vi
In 'Personality Corner' C. B. Rees says: 'Fournier, with
to be brooding upon the problems of his art, brings to*



xandra Palace to give a recital for the BBC Television Service.
ve, intelligent countenance, in which the dark eyes seem often
ic-making the unassailable integrity of the true artist . . .'



STRAUSS IN LONDON

Eighty-three-year-old Richard Strauss came to London last autumn to attend a Festival of his music given by Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at Drury Lane Theatre. Strauss himself conducted the Philharmonia Orchestra in a concert of his own compositions at the Royal Albert Hall and also the BBC Symphony Orchestra in a performance of 'Till Eulenspiegel'.

Although Strauss was very much enfeebled he exercised extraordinary control over the orchestra and used the minimum amount of gesture, but his beat was always clear and incisive



at Broadcasting House

Above: at the Albert Hall

MUSIC HEALS

One of the most tragic penalties of the barbarous sport of war is the penalty of becoming a prisoner. Although you are as human or as inhuman as your enemy, at the worst you are treated like a criminal outcast; at the best merely like an outcast.

In her book 'Not Only Music, Signora!' (John Sherratt and Son, Altrincham) Winifred Percival tells the interesting and moving story of how her husband and herself opened a door to new life for many P.O.W.s in their camps scattered about Britain. Here are some photographs taken during their visits





A study in expression: Arthur Percival is a clever impersonator as well as being a fine violinist

*Arthur Percival, sub-leader of the
Fé Orchestra, and his wife play
Verdi's 'La Danza' to a working
band of Italian prisoners in Selby,
Yorkshire*



'Heilige Nacht' – Winifred Percival plays for German prisoners at a Huddersfield camp at Christmas last year

noble and very moving. It is, perhaps, rather long-winded. But then, men of Mark's age are long-winded – no, not long-winded but at least long-remembered. They think before they speak, and they express their thoughts with deliberation. Wagner may not have been over-lenient to his audience, but he was true to his king. And I must contend that the success of Norman Walker was largely due to the genius of Richard Wagner. Mr Walker sang as nobly as the music demanded, but his action – well, there was no action at all: he might as well have been singing in oratorio. And I recalled Mr Hardcastle's approval of Diggory: 'See how Diggory carries his hands. They're a little too stiff, indeed, but that's no great matter'. Nevertheless, perhaps the producer, Friedrich Schramm, was wise in suppressing impertinent gestures and 'fussiness'. These, he might argue, are legendary figures and must remain as monumental as figures on a tapestry. The orchestra performs all their actions for them.

Constance Shacklock was a Brangäne with the Flagstad spaciousness. And Hans Hotter was the Kurwenal of my dreams. In fact, he achieved the remarkable feat of largely transposing Kurwenal and Hans Sachs. His Sachs was bullying and impatient and his Kurwenal all bubbling tenderness and humanity. And when this Kurwenal died – a magnificent moment – I echoed Horatio's words, 'Now cracks a noble heart'.

'... his Sachs was bullying and impatient.' Well, perhaps that is too severe a criticism. We all know that Sachs was a rough, brusque character; a cobbler with the pungent smell of leather about him –

*Soll mir die Arbeit nicht schmecken, gäb' st Freund, lieber
mich frei,
Thät besser, das Leder zu strecken, und liess' alle Poeterei!*

And yet he was something more – everything more. He was a poet; a man with a great heart and a melting tenderness to-

wards young creatures. Remember: he was the only one who sympathized with Walter's song of youth; remember also his exquisite scene with David in Act III, and his love of Eva, which took the characteristic form of helping her to her own heart's desire instead of to his. Herr Hotter had all the roughness and brusqueness, but not quite enough of the humanity. Several critics suggested at the time that he was hampered by the English version. But that seems to me a specious argument: the English version is not at all bad; and in any case neither Constance Shacklock nor Norman Walker seemed to be unduly hampered by the German version of *Tristan and Isolde*.

I said before that with *The Mastersingers* we were in the shallows. The tide had not quite come in. The performance was meritorious rather than magical. We were grateful, elated, enthusiastic; but we were not yet out of our depth. We managed to keep our feet. Frank Sale and Victoria Sladen helped us by giving the youthful lovers considerable charm but keeping them very definitely in this world. And we had a very spirited and individual portrait of Beckmesser by Grahame Clifford. David Franklyn, as Pogner, sang the difficult 'Feast of John' with very skilful phrasing. After which, of course, Pogner has nothing much to do but stand about and look dignified—for which task Nature has equipped Mr Franklyn very handsomely. All the same, the notorious 'Address' is the bugbear of every bass, coming as it does before he has got thoroughly 'warmed up', and any singer who reaches the high F at the end without noticeable disaster has my congratulations.

There have been quite a number of what in these days are called 'dirty cracks' against the appointment of Karl Rankl at Covent Garden. But in the two Wagner operas, at least, Mr Rankl fully justified himself, and, as should always happen with Wagner, the orchestra proved itself as important and as praiseworthy as the singers.

BALLET IN LONDON

ARNOLD L. HASKELL



THERE is a very definite world crisis in ballet to-day. It is not merely the result of present-day political and economic conditions, but a little crisis all of its own.

There are in all countries an increasing number of good teachers turning out an increasing number of talented and technically well-equipped pupils. What is lacking, however, is the impresario of imagination and artistic integrity who will give an opportunity to these young dancers. This crisis has been foreshadowed for a considerable time. Russian Ballet in its second incarnation, that of Colonel de Basil, had long been living on the Diaghilev heritage, in both its repertoire and its artistic collaborators. While any company could continue for a very long time with the artistic wealth that Diaghilev had amassed, it could do so only by paying the strictest possible attention to matters of detail. It was essential, if the aim of a company was to act as a museum of Russian Ballet, that works should be presented by a perfectly trained team. This, however, did not happen. The Russian Companies split and re-split with amoeba-like frequency, until masterpieces became almost unrecognizable. Added to this internal crisis, difficulties of travel and exchange made it necessary for anyone undertaking the leadership of a ballet company to have a high degree of business acumen and courage. Diaghilev himself had great business acumen, but he was never, even in those spacious days when he reigned, able to make ballet into a paying proposition. He depended in the last resort upon Mæcenas; alas, Mæcenas is as dead as Diaghilev himself. The result is, that while a national company such as our own Sadler's Wells, very expertly con-

trolled, can flourish, the European company (*modèle russe*) that must continually travel is threatened with extinction. That is a very serious matter for the art in general.

The result of this multiplication of leaderless dancers has been the popularity, in both France and America, of the dance recital. In these concerts a group of talented dancers perform either excerpts from ballets or specially created works on a bare stage and generally to the accompaniment of a piano or an inadequate orchestra. The dancer exploits her personality and technique, but ballet itself is lost in the process. In England, where there is ample ballet and a large public rapidly increasing in knowledge, in spite of what many pessimists think, the dance concert has never proved popular. I can think of only one recitalist in the past many years who ever packed a large theatre, and that was Argentina, at the very end of her career when she was already world-famed. She had a master impresario in the late Arnold Meckel.

The Spanish dance is of course a form apart, since the piano accompaniment and guitar, and the throb of the performer's own castanets, supply all the necessary background.

There are two possible types of dance concerts: the one consists of a series of scrappy and disconnected *divertissements*, as unsatisfying as those nasty little gelatine-covered *canapés* that ruin one's appetite at a cocktail party. The other, that can, under ideal circumstances, be artistically justifiable, is made up of definite ballets for from two to four performers. Admirable examples that come to mind are such self-contained works as *Le Spectre de la Rose* and *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort*. Unfortunately too few of such works exist to make a satisfactory programme. Serge Lifar alone has specialized in balletic duologues, and while at times he produces movements of great originality and beauty, all too often the result is involved, over-technical, and monotonous. These *pas de deux* have, however, produced a generation of dancers with an assurance and technical staying-power that are phenomenal.

These remarks are prompted by a season of concert recitals held at the Adelphi Theatre under the title of *Les Étoiles de la Danse*. Unfortunately the performances were given at matinées only, so that from the first the experiment had not a very great chance of success. It presented, however, some outstanding young dancers all of whom belong to ballet proper, and had made their reputations in reputable companies.

The most at home under the circumstances was the young Oranienne, Ana Nevada, who first delighted a London audience when she danced *Los Caprichos* with *Les Ballets des Champs-Élysées*. Her series of Spanish dances were a delight. She showed that true dignity so often lacking in the Spanish dance, yet so essential a part of it, and also a remarkable sense of characterization. Her footwork alone needs greater attention. Body and arms are impeccable, and I have not heard finer castanet playing since Argentina. It is refreshing also to see a young Spanish dancer at the very beginning of her career, and she will undoubtedly, if wisely handled, go a very long way. She was magnificently accompanied by Raphael Arroyo, whose sympathy with the dance was evident even in his *solis*.

The other dancers were far less happy in these surroundings. We had already seen Renée Jeanmaire and Vladimir Skouratoff in ballet proper on two previous occasions, with Serge Lifar in 1946 and with Colonel de Basil in 1947. In neither case were they shown to maximum advantage.

Jeanmaire is the most essentially French of any dancer to-day; a real Molière *soubrette*. She has dazzling technique allied to real wit as distinguished from humour; while Skouratoff, magnificent in physique, can, if given the opportunity, become the outstanding male classical dancer of to-day. At present he is somewhat lacking in stagecraft and attack. These dancers appeared in two small Lifar ballets – *Pygmalion*, to music by Prokofiev, and Poulenc's *Aubade*. Both works require scenery and orchestra, and as they were presented they placed a formidable handicap on the performers.

Aubade was never very satisfactory from the point of view of musical treatment, but properly presented Lifar's light satirical treatment was evident, and had its point. When the unfortunate Diana was forced to pick her bow off the obtrusive piano, everything was destroyed.

In excerpts from the classical *La Fille mal Gardée* and *Arlequinade* they were able to show more of their quality. These ballets, especially the *Drigo Arlequinade*, are old-fashioned rather than classical. They demand the exploitation of personality from the ballerina, and this Jeanmaire has in plenty. In *La Fille mal Gardée* one must note a very fine piece of mime from the veteran Moyseenko. Even so, such works call for lavish production, for the entrance of a *corps de ballet* to rest principals and audience.

The other two dancers, Colette Marchand and Serge Perrault, suffered still more from inadequate presentation. Colette Marchand is a truly lyrical dancer with magnificently fluid line and a really fine musical sense. She has the figure of a Tanagra. As a romantic rather than a classicist she needs a careful setting. Perrault is a gallant partner, an artist, but an indifferent technician. Their rendering of the *adagio* from *Swan Lake*, however beautifully danced, was a calamity. Tschaikovsky's lush music, rendered indifferently on a piano centred on the stage and attracting to itself most of the light, completely shattered any illusions. In their other ballets, Lifar's *Romeo and Juliet* and *La Péri*, the handicap was the same, yet in momentary flashes one could see the very real quality of Colette Marchand.

Under the circumstances it is difficult to judge the choreography of either of these works. Both were seen before during Lifar's Cambridge Theatre season, but scenically equally badly produced. No Lifar ballet has ever been properly shown in London, and it is not easy, therefore, to understand the Lifar cult among French critics, that included the late André Levinson, greatest writer on ballet since Gautier. It is easier to see

why the dancers should worship him. He exploits the individual to the full, making her dance not for the three or four minutes of a Petipa variation or *adagio*, but for fifteen or twenty minutes. In that time she is made to reveal to the full her technical and emotional ability and her power to hold an audience. No other choreographer gives the *soliste* such an opportunity to remain centre stage in the limelight. There are of necessity passages that are boring, there is much exploring of difficult technical problems of passionate interest to the dancers themselves but that cannot be theatrically effective, and during the course of which the flow of the music is completely ignored. Then suddenly there are moments of moving beauty. Such moments occur in *Romeo and Juliet* when the lovers are reunited after death, and also in *La Péri*, the most successful of these small works. This Lifar choreography does become more interesting with repeated visits, and one would like to have an opportunity of seeing *Le Chevalier et la Demoiselle*, which has been acclaimed his masterpiece.

In these *Étoiles de la Danse* the travelling European ballet (*modèle russe*) has its natural leaders. It is sad to see them lost in this fashion. If they must dance in recitals, then let them be presented with the very maximum of artistry.

Their case is a proof of the crisis in the ballet world to-day.

CONCERTS IN LONDON

GEORGE DANNATT



EVERYONE whose task it is to record in words the emotions which have thrilled or dulled his senses has, at some time or another, used illness as an excuse for lying back in comfort to take stock of his experiences over the preceding period of time. It is, perhaps, somewhat unoriginal of me to commence my periodic criticism of the London musical scene by utilizing the results of my mental perambulations as the peg, or should I say row of hooks, on which to hang my observations. Nevertheless, I did at least *think*, even if, as my fever waxed and waned, I allowed myself to become too personally involved in my likes and dislikes to arrive at the balanced judgments which true, selfless criticism demands. It is, then, while convalescing that I now try to crystallize some of my effervescent mental meanderings, offspring of the thirty-five concerts and recitals attended during three months, and to record those observations knowing that it is unlikely they will reach the reader until 'the Autumnal leaves strow the brooks in Vallombrosa'.

The months in question could, I suppose, be taken as presenting – except possibly for a brief period in the early summer – a typical cross-section of the concert-going opportunities which London provides. The musical appetite of this vast, shifting London population is as varied as the bait with which the concert promoters, orchestras, *ensembles* and recitalists strive to land their audiences. Orchestrally, the fare offered by the B.B.C. in their Wednesday Symphony Concerts, if not the most digestible, certainly displays the most eclectic taste; the programmes of the Royal Philharmonic Society, given on the alternate Wednesdays, have also been highly commendable. The London

Philharmonic Orchestra has pursued, on Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons, a course of more popular and somewhat conventional programmes, for this body seemingly relies on the appeal of their world-famous interpretative artists plus a strong publicity campaign in order to gain its audience.

The Philharmonia Orchestra is undoubtedly the most vital organization of the younger orchestras, and is rapidly gaining a position of importance among the longer-established concerns. It is they who are the performers in a new and welcome non-profit-making body called the *New Era Concert Society*; from their first series of five concerts it is evident that the venture deserves support, as did the similar Courtauld-Sargent Society before the war. In the unfortunately frigid atmosphere of the Central Hall the Morley College Concerts Society attracts generally a small audience of the intelligentsia to be aurally ravished by nothing later than 1700 nor anything contemporary earlier than 1930. In the first category, it was indeed a delight to hear once again Tallis's *Forty-Part Motet*. This vital and effective work is laid out for eight sections of the choir, with five parts to each section. Somewhat naturally the extremely resourceful contrapuntal texture is over-thick at times, but the whole is a conception of great beauty; it was performed again as a request item, and Tippett's *Child of our Time* was also repeated in the same concert. These two works, the Monteverdi-Redlich *Vespers*, and Purcell's *Ode on St Cecilia's Day* seem likely to remain an integral part of the Morley College Concerts, and rightly so; but one wonders whether the Society should produce a work of such questionable importance as *Le Vin Herbé*, by the Swiss composer, Frank Martin – presumably they would have been unable to undertake it had the Third Programme not mothered the project under its all-embracing wing.

It was the B.B.C. also, which, at a Wednesday Concert, gave us another dramatic work, Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher*. These two extremely interesting oratorios I was able to hear within the space of a week, and both works proved,

broadly speaking, failures. It is absorbing to consider why one has arrived at that conclusion, because each composer set about solving his self-allotted task in an utterly different way. Each work has the foundation of a scholarly text, in the case of *Le Vin Herbé* based on the Tristan and Isolde legend as recounted by Joseph Bédier, in the case of Joan of Arc by Paul Claudel; it mitigated against the latter work that no printed text was available. Martin is employing a story which Wagner has already immortalized in music-drama, a story which, incidentally, Debussy toyed with for an opera based on the same book by Bédier, but abandoned. Martin takes the greatest pains to avoid a heightening of the drama; apart from his soloists he employs a chamber choir and a tiny string *ensemble*. The sounds produced by his drooping choral writing lack virility; but if these wailings had been introduced only occasionally, they would have become an important factor in the score: poignancy in music cannot be extended indefinitely without boredom. Presumably he has string writing at his finger-tips, **but** he made little use of his knowledge. There was no lightening of the general gloom but for a few bars at the end, where he **allowed** himself the luxury of a couple of *pizzicatos*. The work is negative and a-sexual. Not so with the Honegger: his symbolic work is positive and lusty. He keeps busy two principal speaking parts (Joan and Brother Dominic), thirteen singing-speaking parts, a full chorus, a girls' chorus, and a full symphony orchestra. Of the performers, Parry Jones deserves the highest praise for his flexible characterization and audibility whether he was speaking or singing. Only in the rarest instances does the spoken voice successfully come 'through' music, and the inability of the voice to blend, plus the over-intensification by 'effects' of an already harrowing subject, makes the work, for me, a failure. This criticism refers to concert performances, and very likely if the story were 'masqued' as a mediæval play, with the singers and orchestra hidden, it would be a deeply moving experience. Even then, the passing events

are occurring to Joan in her head for an hour and a half, and one doubts whether Honegger's music is great enough for the sense of 'time' to be extinguished in the minds of the audience.

How we love our tremendous works, our lengthy programmes, our festivals. The very lovely performance of Purcell's *Ode on St Cecilia's Day, 1692*, by Morley College under Michael Tippett on the eve of that day, has already been mentioned, and it is to be hoped that the performance will become an annual event. On the day itself the *Daily Herald* sponsored a Festival in aid of the Musicians' Benevolent Fund. The most important new work was Gerald Finzi's *Ode on St Cecilia's Day* to words by Edmund Blunden. It is a beautiful and distinguished conception containing some masterly choral writing. The B.B.C. Orchestra under Boult gave the finest performance of Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony I have yet heard, but it was a mistake musically to follow this with Elgar's flamboyant arrangement of the national anthem; musically, too, the concert was over-long and the organ interludes inappropriate.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir under Frederick Jackson gave a quite attractive performance of *Messiah*, one of many during the winter; the pace, particularly in the choruses, was rushed, and the wretched Albert Hall organ was allowed to obtrude too often and too coarsely. It is astonishing that conductors do not realize the full horror of that organ, and import an electronic one. The same orchestra also gave a series of concerts under Bruno Walter which included a reverent and delicate performance of Mahler's First Symphony and what must have been a highly authentic rendering of Bruckner's *Te Deum*, but which, with its interminable string figuration, was for me a dull and uninspired work; the sort of composition which, like Mahler's wearily long Eighth Symphony and Berlioz's *Messe des Morts*, one might want to hear only once every ten years.

NORTHERN DIARY



SCOTLAND: MAURICE LINDSAY

THE most significant happening in recent months has been the by now undeniable decline of the Scottish Orchestra towards its place of little artistic consequence and financial instability of about fifteen years ago. When John Barbirolli came to Glasgow, he found an orchestra in poor shape and audiences scanty. By sheer hard work and tireless publicity, he built up his audiences until he was getting capacity houses. More hard work and his great talents combined to raise the orchestra to a pitch which it could rarely have equalled for at least a quarter of a century. After him, Georg Szell maintained this standard, until the outbreak of war. Then, inevitably, the departure of men to the forces led to a lowering of standards. Under Warwick Braithwaite, and others, however, the orchestra kept going, and the floating service population even caused an increase in the by now large audiences. But the first year of peace brought a change. Mr Braithwaite, who had declared himself strongly on the side of those who urged that no orchestra could ever reach the front rank until it was established on a permanent basis, was not re-engaged. Many people suspected that his forthrightness in upholding a truth unpalatable to the timid Management Committee played no small part in bringing about his dismissal. No one, in spite of this, felt other than friendly towards Walter Susskind, who came in Mr Braithwaite's stead.

Feeling on behalf of a permanent orchestra ran high, but the Management Committee stood firm against it. Then came the Edinburgh Festival of 1947. The 'Scottish' was invited to participate. Apparently caught unprepared, the Management Committee rushed out ill-conceived plans for an 'experimental'

summer season. Two good concert-giving months, April and May, with the concert-going momentum of the winter behind them, were allowed to elapse before the 'experiment' got under way. A large number of players had already accepted summer engagements elsewhere, so a reshuffle became necessary. The outcome was a series of concerts at which the standard of orchestral playing was frequently fifth-rate, and never higher than third. So the 'experiment' failed financially and artistically. It was hardly surprising to find that the orchestra did not distinguish itself at the Festival, and in fact, could not stand comparison with even the least exalted of the other orchestras taking part!

With the beginning of the 1947-8 winter season, there was some slight improvement in one section of the orchestra. In his more inspired moments, Mr Susskind has managed to get good second-rate performances out of his players, but never more and usually less. The fault is not Mr Susskind's. He has given us ample proof of his own considerable abilities as a musician, but they are largely wasted on the hopeless material at his disposal.

In the spring, the Management Committee announced (secretly triumphant, one feels) that in view of last year's failure, there would be no summer season this year. Significantly, the 'Scottish' has not been invited to take part in the 1948 Edinburgh Festival. All these things, considered alongside the fact that audiences are dwindling, clearly point the way back to the old, intolerable state of affairs.

Meanwhile, the Edinburgh Founder's Guild seems to be gathering strength. It is now apparent that nothing worth while can be expected from the 'Scottish' so long as it remains on a temporary basis, and it seems to me, therefore, that Scottish music-lovers, including those in Glasgow, should back the Guild to the full extent of their resources. From the Management Committee of the 'Scottish', we can look for nothing but smug haverings about their orchestra's imagined successes:

from the Founder's Guild, if persistent rumour be true, we may yet get a Scottish National Orchestra, based on Edinburgh, which will bid fair to challenge the best that England can produce.

Little enough out of the usual run has been put before us these winter months. The 'Scottish' has now taken to repeating 'safe' romantic war-horses in the one season, and when, in a fit of daring, it gave us a half-American programme, including Barber's *School for Scandal* overture and Aaron Copland's *El Salon Mexico*, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* had to be thrown in as a make-weight. Mr Susskind, spotlighted in a specially darkened hall, both played and conducted the work from the piano. During the interval, I remarked to a neighbouring 'regular' that Gershwin had filled the hall. He replied, 'Yes. But if they ran a dance they'd get the hall fuller still.'

The Scottish Home Service of the B.B.C. has, as usual, provided the most interesting Scottish musical fare. I missed the performance of Ian Whyte's String Quartet in D, unfortunately. A repeat performance of Robert Kemp and Cedric Thorpe Davies' ballad opera for radio, *The Trumpeter of Fyvie*, confirmed my first impression that, despite occasional moments of musical diffuseness, it is a pleasant work in a form which holds great radio possibilities. St Andrew's Night brought a repeat performance of Ian Whyte's Symphony, and here again, greater familiarity increased both my pleasure and my respect for the work. It seems to me to be his best large-scale work so far, at least of those which I have heard, and much more integrated than his Piano Concerto. St Andrew's Night was also the occasion for a recital by Joan Alexander and John Tainsh of some of the songs from Francis George Scott's forthcoming Saltire Society subscription volume. They proved to be lovely things, beautifully put across by Scotland's two leading singers, and they left me in no doubt whatever that when Scott's work becomes known, he will stand alongside Peter Warlock, and possibly several inches above him.

LIVERPOOL: A. K. HOLLAND

It is becoming a fairly general opinion that all is not well with the state of music in Liverpool. In point of quantity it may be that we are not appreciably worse off than we were before the war. But to anyone who attempts to take a broad view of the situation it must be evident that, apart from an almost unbearable monotony, there is an air of mediocrity and a lack of enterprise in our musical endeavours.

This is the city which twenty-five years ago had the strongest branch of the now defunct British Musical Society in the country: at one time it numbered over five hundred strong and that, considering the type of concerts it promoted, eclectic in character and largely of a modernist tendency, was no mean achievement. It was a calamity when that society merged itself in another in such a manner that after a short time not a trace of its policy or ideals remained. The Music Guild, which had an adventurous history before the war and was at least an attempt to keep some semblance of local activity going, sank into the ground during the dark days and is now nothing but a resuscitated corpse without a spark of genuine vitality in it. The Rodewald Society, which perpetuates the memory of a fine amateur musician and a pioneer of popular orchestral concerts, is devoted almost exclusively to string quartets and has a perennial struggle to keep its head above water. The weekly lunch-hour concerts, with endless succession of pianists eked out with an occasional vocalist or fiddler, are pitifully attended, and the tired business worker who is supposed to patronize them cannot be blamed if he spends his midday interval chasing goods.

What is the reason for this dismal state of affairs? I would put it down in the first instance to a lack of initiative and leadership on the part of the local musicians and to the lack of

encouragement given them by local institutions. In the old days we had two or three flourishing amateur orchestras in the neighbourhood. We had a Bach Choir and we had an amateur repertory opera company, besides literally dozens of amateur companies dealing in the lighter forms of opera. We are told that their disappearance is nobody's loss, and from an artistic point of view that may be true. Yet all these things did point to an active local interest in the practice of music. Now, the local musician is not going to spend his time on such things unless he can get something back in the way of useful experience and a little bit of fame. It seems to be almost a fixed rule that the local musician, whether conductor, singer, or instrumentalist, is unfit to appear on the scene. True, the Philharmonic Society occasionally permits one of its players to appear in a solo capacity, and for the sake of form engages a local pianist or so from time to time, but that is about all.

The paramount fact is that for the public at large Liverpool music means the Philharmonic Concerts, with an occasional visiting celebrity and a few miscellaneous recitals to fill in the occasions when the Philharmonic is not in session. And that brings us to the second reason for the atmosphere of monotony that prevails. In order to maintain the Philharmonic Orchestra on a full-time basis we are compelled to have far more concerts than are really good for the health either of the players or of the public. Constantly the Philharmonic is compelled to seek new ways and means of keeping its orchestra employed. Last year, on top of the public concerts, it was discovered that an audience could be got together for private concerts for industrial workers. Firms were circularized and tickets showered on works organizers, all on the very democratic basis of one price for all seats, and it was the luck of the draw whether the office boy got the box and the director a nice seat in the gallery. These having proved successful, someone had the bright idea of multiplying the number of concerts by four and running each

one in triplicate. The results are awaited with interest, but one fact already emerges. If you take away from the normal public the people who go instead to the special concerts, the results are likely to be much the same: smaller audiences for both types, and the net gain nil.

Nor can it be said that our conductors are giving us much of a lead. Here to-day and gone to-morrow, what sort of inspiration do they give to local pride or creative activity? We were unfortunate enough to lose Sir Malcolm Sargent through illness for a spell just before Christmas, and the New Year had scarcely started before he left us for another month. It is not necessary to contend that a change of conductor occasionally may not be a good thing, but a permanent orchestra does really demand a permanent conductor and one who is able to take an active share in the musical affairs of the city. In Sir Malcolm's place we had Hugo Rignold, of whom encouraging reports were available. Now Mr Rignold is a very capable conductor, but as he has a post in London which must occupy his first attention, it goes without saying that Liverpool's business can be of only passing interest. And possibly the works chosen for him are not such as he himself would select if given a free hand. As for our own local conductor, Louis Cohen, he seems to be almost exclusively relegated to the task of conducting the school concerts and making the best of a bad job. Whether these concerts are worth their cost is an open question. Indeed, there are those who think that the Corporation would be spending its money to better purpose if it were to equip the schools with decent pianos and gramophones and employ a properly qualified musician with teaching experience to do the work.

As we go to press I have just heard that Hugo Rignold has been appointed resident conductor of the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Sir Malcolm Sargent will continue his association with the orchestra, but now only as chief guest conductor.

LEEDS: ERIC TODD

INTEREST in Leeds music is naturally mainly focused on the progress of the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra, that great experiment in municipal culture which has as yet no counterpart in this country. It may be, however, that this statement will shortly require some qualification, for already a group of Authorities in the North-East has requested details of the scheme in order to explore the possibilities of a like venture. Good luck to their deliberations. We wish them all the success which has so far attended the efforts of the Yorkshire Committee.

From the material point of view this success was most pronounced during one spring fortnight, when the orchestra gave eight concerts in different centres, playing to capacity in every case, including one which took place in Leeds during a one-day transport strike when the presence of an audience of nearly two thousand surprised the most optimistic. Add to this the fact that the programmes contained such unfamiliar items as the Walton Symphony, the Bax Violin Concerto, and the Third Piano Concerto of Prokofiev, and it will be realized that these great audiences were not attracted merely to hear old favourites which have been repeated *ad nauseam*, but were prepared to accept those new experiences which keep artistic interest alive.

It has not been all plain sailing. For a time audiences in the smaller towns diminished, and the scheme was promptly criticized by the business interests in those areas. Press reports of a Dewsbury Chamber of Trade meeting contained adverse criticism to the effect that the concerts were wanted by only a small number of people in the town. The public answered that in the best possible way, by filling the hall on the occasion of the next concert. Another criticism more worthy of consideration was

that the concerts were too 'highbrow' (horrid term). There may be a grain of truth in this. So far the orchestra is building up a repertoire, and it is natural that, as each new programme is prepared, it should be repeated at the various centres. Perhaps Mr Maurice Miles, who is responsible for programme building as well as direction of the orchestra, will in future modify this policy, for what is suitable for Leeds, with its tradition of festival, choral society, and orchestral performances, may be too advanced for a district which has not enjoyed these advantages. Before leaving this topic it may be well to point out to those smaller Authorities who are finding the financial burden a heavy one that there exists a body, the Arts Council of Great Britain, whose duties include the provision of material assistance to further the cause of music in just such areas as they represent.

To turn now to the orchestra itself. It was most gratifying to find the committee promptly answering the just criticism of the lack of strings (in quantity only; of the quality there was never any doubt) by authorizing the engagement of eleven more players, which will bring the strength of the section to the normal complement of forty-six. With regard to the woodwind, Mr Miles is trying a long-term experiment of a novel character. Terms of engagement were so arranged that he is able to replace principals on each instrument by the third player for some of the items. This enables the performers to avoid undue fatigue, but it also means that the combination of soloists is constantly changing, a circumstance which may rob them of that essential confidence in one another which is one of the secrets of the successful wood-wind *ensemble*.

Two engagements of the orchestra — I write in April — deserve special mention. The first is the Easter performance of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, when they appear for the first time with the Leeds Philharmonic Choir. The second is the Festival of Contemporary Music at Huddersfield, when Mr Miles

will present works by Vaughan Williams, Rubbra, Rawsthorne, Jacobson, Tippett, Britten, Walton, Lennox Berkeley, and Moeran. This Festival is obviously of such importance that it should bring north those elusive gentlemen, the London critics. Like most practitioners whose experience is necessarily limited, we of the north would welcome a second opinion.

Financial results of the 1947 Leeds Musical Festival show a surplus, the first since 1928, of £510, the total attendance at the eight concerts being over twelve thousand. The report contains the promise of another Festival in 1950, for which it is hoped new works will be commissioned.

The Northern Philharmonic Orchestra, with the support of the Musicians' Union, has made another attempt to obtain Saturday dates at Leeds Town Hall for next season. The future of this body of players, to whom we owe so much, is causing some concern in the city. Whether Leeds can support two series of orchestral concerts is a debatable point, but there certainly exists a need for a first-rate orchestra to accompany the many choral societies in the district, work which the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra cannot possibly undertake within the present limits of its constitution.

Chamber music provides both good and bad news. We welcome the revival of the Leeds University Chamber Music Concerts after a lapse of years, even though they take place at the awkward hour of 5.30 p.m. We have to acknowledge also our debt to the players of the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra who are forming groups and enlarging our resources in this direction. The bad news comes from Leeds Concert Society, who urgently need more support if they are to continue their excellent series of summer recitals.

We await with interest the first appearance of a choir, formed for the performance of motets and similar works, by Dr Melville Cook, whose fine productions at Leeds Parish Church should receive far better support than they do at present.

MANCHESTER: J. H. ELLIOT

AN event of very special significance during the period here under review was the 1157th concert given by the Manchester Tuesday Midday Concerts Society – not because any mystic property attaches to that particular number, but because the date on which it was recorded coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the appointment of Edward Isaacs as Director of the Concerts. Mr Isaacs himself was asked by the Committee to make one of his all-too-rare appearances as a solo pianist, and we seized the opportunity to pay tribute to the achievements of a remarkable man – to the courageous artist who readapted his executive skill to new and difficult conditions after he had tragically lost his sight, and to the sound musician and skilled administrator who has piloted these concerts to a unique position in the musical life of the city.

Archie Camden was the visiting artist – though, of course, he was no stranger, having been a popular figure in the 'old' Hallé Orchestra for many years. He treated us to some adept and artistic bassooning (if that is the right word) with Jan Kerrison as his pianist colleague, and warmed our hearts with an appreciative little speech about his friend Edward Isaacs. He reminded us that the way of the concert director is a hard one, and that Mr Isaacs has shown outstanding skill in the planning of the concerts and in the ironing-out of difficulties. I suppose we are all apt to take such things for granted; but a moment's reflection will suggest some of the thousand-and-one snags that can and do arise, often calling for last-minute adjustments. But the bare arrangement of the season's events is in itself a colossal task. As Mr Isaacs wrote to me a year or two ago: 'The same excitement or pleasure or fear attaches to the annual job of choosing what I believe to be the right folk from among literally hundreds of good artists – to recommend them to the

Committee – to make all the arrangements, from A to Z, for the holding of the concerts!’ And the Tuesday concerts have their own special problems: they hold a delicate balance between established artists who are popular attractions and newcomers whose attainments justify their being given the chance of a public appearance at an important series. These problems have for a quarter of a century been solved by Edward Isaacs with the happiest results. No wonder that, some time ago, Manchester University conferred on him a Master of Arts degree as a mark of appreciation. I am glad, too, that the Arts Council of Great Britain has given tangible evidence of its awareness of the cultural value of these concerts, and that the Manchester Education Committee regularly sends ‘bus-loads of youngsters to the Houldsworth Hall on Tuesdays at one-fifteen.

It has often been said that the Tuesday concerts are delectable oases in the desert of daily business, and I can speak with feeling of the delight it is to leaven a dull routine with three-quarters of an hour wherein one may hear at the very least good music competently performed, and on many occasions artists of the highest rank – Britten and Pears, perhaps, or Kentner, or Kathleen Ferrier. The list is a long one. And this we owe, in large measure, to the insight and tireless patience of the Director of Concerts. Let me add that Edward Isaacs is a man of great modesty and much personal charm; so if I have outraged the former quality, I trust in the latter to accomplish my forgiveness.

The first Hallé Concert of the New Year, so to speak, wasn’t. Or, to state the case plainly, it was a guest evening when we welcomed the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra to the Albert Hall. (By the way, there is no echo in our Albert Hall – there isn’t room for one.) This idea, unthinkable – or perhaps it was just never thought of – under the old régime, is a splendid way of broadening experience and extending courtesies to other musical communities. Perhaps it could be developed? There is talk

just now of the Hallé Orchestra visiting Prague and other European centres, so the possibilities are exciting. Sir Malcolm Sargent, unfortunately, was prevented from appearing with the Liverpool orchestra as planned, but the programme was taken over without modification by Hugo Rignold, who directed a splendid performance of *The Planets*. He has an abundant sense of style, knows what he wants, and obtains his effects without fuss.

Would we change our own orchestra for that of Merseyside? Well, no – excuse, please, Mr Holland – we wouldn't. For one thing, the Hallé (if I may say so without offence) gives the impression of being a fresher and keener *ensemble*. It has much younger blood, it is true – but neither sympathy for youth, nor local patriotism (which is a stupid sentiment, anyway), nor anything else except plain honesty can account for my going on record to express the opinion that ours is in all respects the better orchestra. Make no error – Liverpool's is good. But the Hallé is super.

John Barbirolli, after an enforced rest (manifestly the result of overwork) which happily for us did not interfere with his Manchester commitments, appeared in brilliant form at the succeeding concert, when he gave us our first experience of Roussel's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, which one hopes will be oft-repeated.

We recovered only slowly from the musical lassitude which falls over us before Christmas and extends well into the New Year. There were, however, some scattered concerts and recitals. Margerie Few made an excellent impression here with her programme of Chopin. "

BIRMINGHAM: JOHN WATERHOUSE

THERE is certainly plenty of music still in and around Birmingham. For example, on the night before I settled down to

write this bulletin, there were at least five concerts towards which, in my capacity of newspaper critic, I might have set my ragged sails. In the large theatre of the Midland Institute the City Orchestra Club was hearing a recital of Old Music with Old Instruments (in old costume). There was a chamber concert in the small theatre of the same building. There were two piano recitals, one at Queen's College Chambers and one at the University Overseas Club. And, away in a church on a summit with a fine view of the Black Country, the Brierley Hill Concerts Society had arranged an historical programme of church music.

There has been something every day this week. Sunday (afternoon): City of Birmingham Orchestra, with an excellent performance of Walton's Concerto by the orchestra's principal viola, Gilbert Shufflebotham. Monday: Fournier and Solomon at a Barber Concert. Tuesday: a group of enterprising young local players (violin, oboe, 'cello, piano) who have just consolidated and christened themselves The Clavis Quartet and who promise us a supply of late baroque. Wednesday: Dr Cunningham's lunch-hour organ recital, of course; but on this occasion, impelled by dumbfounded curiosity, I committed my ration of column to the results of an evening journey to Kidderminster, where the Nonentities Amateur Dramatic Society was doing *The Beggar's Opera* with (believe it or not) a complete new set of music by its chairman-producer. Thursday: C.B.O. again, Mewton-Wood in Mozart K. 450 – the rest was stock, and I left early to write my notice and get out to a Handsworth church in time for one of the B.B.C. Midland Chorus's admirable Motet programmes. Which brings us to quintuple Friday. I rather think there are some concerts to-night too, but I have not faced up to them yet. There will be C.B.O. again to-morrow, and a newsprint-starved paper may be glad not to have two notices to print on Monday.

It was so throughout the autumn. The procession of Town Hall pianists must have been one of the most congested on record. Were they all getting their dates in before the cold

season? Would the usual scantiness of audiences cause them to cross Birmingham off their visiting-lists? No, already there are indications that some will be with us again 'before the swallow dares'.

Despite wretched houses as the rule rather than the exception, despite the gloomy outlook of my last bulletin, there seems to be something in the air of the 'Forward' city that makes both local and visiting musicians keep on hoping.

Let us hope this hope will persist among those who direct the orchestra. There has been a definite decline in support this season. Not that, proportionately, the houses ever approach the degree of thinness that one is coming to take for granted at other kinds of concert. The cheaper seats are nearly always substantially occupied. The more expensive lower gallery, where one would look for the assembly of the city's wealth and culture, by no means always so. It is certainly true that the presence on a programme of one or another of something less than a dozen extravagantly popular works can usually be relied upon to attract the desired increment, and tempt members of the wider public to pay extra to get in; it is not, however, at all evident that a contemporary or unfamiliar piece will cause a corresponding, or even a perceptible, shrinkage. What I gather to be the Committee's present intention – even fewer adventures in future – seems to me as misguided from the financial as it is from the cultural point of view. The decline is due, I think, to two causes: to the nation-wide passing of the big orchestral boom; and to the fact that, in the long run, two orchestral concerts a week have proved too much for the city's musical digestion. Only those at grips with the orchestra's economic complexities can say whether there is a way round this latter problem; but I am quite sure that, if two concerts there must be, a discreet but continual seasoning of novelty is more likely to stimulate the digestion than is a still further narrowing of diet.

Fortunately the orchestra itself does not seem to have lost

heart, to judge by its playing, even though settling down after the numerous summer changes of personnel took rather longer than at first seemed probable.

Apart from the orchestra's concerts, Dr Cunningham's recitals, and the nocturnal Motets of the B.B.C. Midland Chorus, the most memorable events I have attended in the past quarter have been, in chronological order: Barber concert with Slobodskaya and the Bloch (Walton's quartet, new piano quartet by Rubbra); Bloch's *Sacred Service* by the City Choir; Pears and Britten in *Die Schöne Müllerin* at another Barber; a song recital by Joy McArden; Purcell's *King Arthur* by the University Musical Society; *Messiah* at Wolverhampton Civic Hall, with a chorus of thirty-six and with a most scholarly and beautiful essay at the original accompaniments under Dr Percy Young; *Messiah* as usual, but splendidly sung, by the City Choir; a superb performance of Bloch's Viola Suite by Lena Wood and Tom Bromley; striking though slow-moving music by Wilfrid Mellers to the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus, for Professor George Thomson's new translation; and the admirably selected, admirably played, admirably explained, and (despite the Old Costume) quite 'unarty' recital of Old Music with Old Instruments, by Cecily Arnold, Marshall Johnson, Desmond Dupre, and Edgar Hunt, which I chose from the five last night.

DESULTORIA—III

N. L. SMITH



UNLESS I am more than usually at sea I seem to have found a case of Homer nodding which escaped even the lynx-eyed Tovey. In the twelfth bar of the C sharp minor Sonata of Beethoven (nicknamed *Moonlight*) the bass goes down from C natural to B natural and, simultaneously, so does a middle part. This, one was brought up to believe, is very naughty. Paderewski, if you listen carefully to the record, treats it as a misprint and moves the bass down only. But curiously enough this very page is selected in Tovey's edition for a reproduction of the 1802 edition, and there is the 'consecutive' as large as life. In the immediately preceding bar Tovey does, in fact, correct a more obvious misprint in the 1802 edition — a missing accidental.



What a wonderful little modulation, by the way, is that flattening of the G sharp almost when you don't notice it. Later in the movement the identical passage of the opening is repeated, but this time it proceeds normally into the relative major. The usual habit of the classics is to give you *vin ordinaire* to start with and to keep the vintage wines for later development. One is almost reminded of the criticism of the wine-list at Cana of Galilee.



Textual criticism is probably interesting to anyone who cares to study it. Music obviously scores here because of its late appearance. If Virgil and the rest had written subsequently to Gutenberg's invention we should have been spared all those disputations caused by the carelessness of illiterate copyists. A footnote to Chopin's final Mazurka in F minor says that it was

composed too near his death for him even to hear it played; but in general most composers must have been able to check over the printed version.

★

Talking of Chopin, there is an interesting little case of what scholars call '*varia lectio*' in the short preface to his G minor Ballade. This ends with a chord in which the left thumb plays either D natural or E flat, as the case may be. Scharwenka's edition gets quite snooty on the subject, accusing a rival editor of putting in the E flat because it sounded nice but stating roundly that the D natural is undoubtedly correct. If anyone has the interest to count exactly twenty-eight bars on he will find the identical chord (momentarily it is true) complete with D flat. This of course proves nothing. But if it is true that someone else suggested the D flat and that Chopin at a later date adopted it, one is reminded of John Shand, in *What Every Woman Knows*, who did not scruple to use as his very own the brilliant emendation to his election speech suggested by Maggie.

★

Yet another case, even more hackneyed. Almost everyone, whether or not he is a *Sylphides* addict, knows the small Prelude in A major. Put into baby language the scheme is a simple one of Rumty-ta-ta-ta repeated eight times; but according to one version this applies only to the first six and the final, the seventh having the variation Rumty-tee-ta-ta. On the old principle of what is known as the *difficilior lectio* one would guess that this last, if it has fairly good authority, is correct, the likelihood being that someone would make it conform to the pattern of the whole rather than *vice versa*. I regret to say that I don't know the answer. Moisiwitch, by the way, a few months ago in a B.B.C. recital of all the Preludes, cut the knot by repeating the whole eight bars (regardless of Chopin's text) and giving a fifty-fifty option on the two varieties.

★

Some years ago there was a newspaper correspondence that attempted to decide which was the worst of all hymn-tunes. The majority vote went, I think, to *The Day Thou Gavest*, which is perhaps a bit unfair despite its sugary repetition. In the non-hymnal class I would back for a high place *The Soldiers of the Queen*, purely from the ugliness of its melodic pattern – that horrible downward leap twice repeated and that final straight upward sequence. Trevelyan's *Social History* speaks of the 'marriage' of the music of Henry Lawes to the immortal verse of Milton's *Comus*, and the metaphor is an apt one. In the present case it is satisfactory that there is no suspicion of a *mésalliance*, the words (including the accent on the 'of') being in the worst Boer War vein.

*

It is a common enough experience to fail in later years to recapture certain juvenile raptures. But I wonder how many shared my disappointment when, after only a few years, Disney's *Fantasia* reappeared near Oxford Circus in the Flying Bomb era. One had thought reminiscently of the *Casse-Noisette* as being wholly delightful, and the gaily-coloured contrapuntal whorls quite a good idea in the Bach. Perhaps the audience was to blame the second time – they had mostly been advised, apparently, that the whole thing was a 'real comic' with tolerable background music, and the loud guffaws in and out of season made it difficult even to close the eyes to the centaurs and the dinosaurs and enjoy the magnificent sound-track.

*

Could not some improvement be made in the 'dubbing' technique in films generally? Even if a heroine is easy to look at and terrible to listen to, she could surely do the necessary singing and have the noise blanked out somehow. The lip-language that is so often seen is very insulting to the intelligence.

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